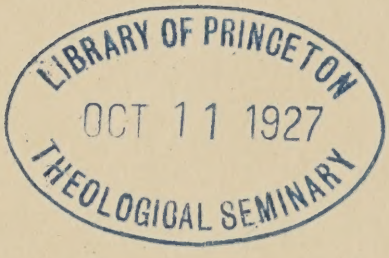
CHRISTIANITY AND COMMON SENSE

BY

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY



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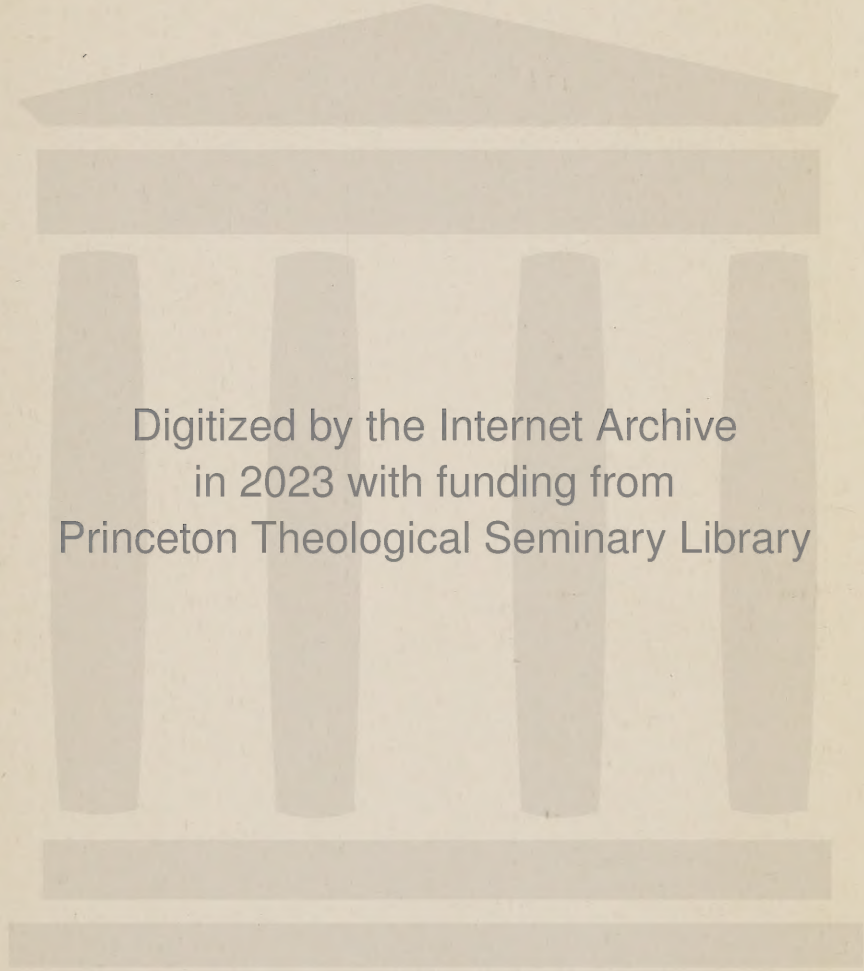
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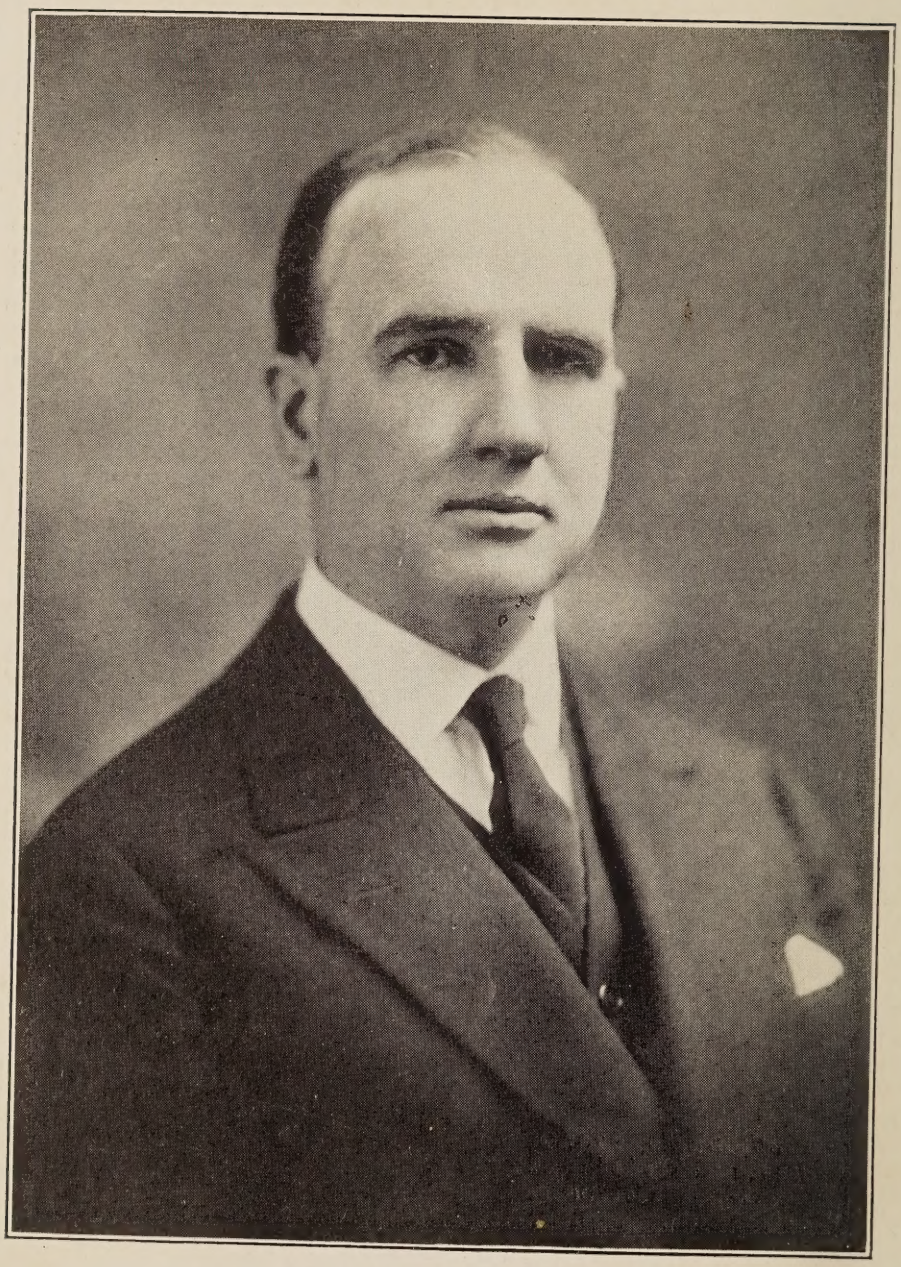

Horace Edward Moseley

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMON SENSE

A DIALOGUE OF FAITH

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BY

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY, D.D.

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IN THE U. S. A.

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PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY

Chicago Philadelphia Toronto

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.
AT THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS
THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY, PROPRIETORS
PHILADELPHIA

PREFACE

THE discussions of this book upon the great themes of the Christian Religion have been cast into the form of a dialogue between a Christian believer and a visitor from an imaginary world who has come down to earth to examine the life and faith of man. Into this visitor's mouth I have put some of those doubts and difficulties which suggest themselves to man's mind when he thinks upon the Christian revelation and its relationship to our duty here and our destiny hereafter. My hope has been that a book cast in this form might have a reading from some who would pass by the more conventional type of book on the Christian faith and its claims upon the conscience of man.

A number of years ago, I picked up in a London bookstall a little pamphlet which bore the title, *Christianity and Common Sense.* I do not now recall the name of the author, and the pamphlet has long since disappeared from my library and its contents from my memory. But I am indebted to that pamphlet for the title I have given this series of papers and for its suggestion of what has seemed to me a somewhat refreshing method of dealing with those sublime

truths which Christianity has revealed to mankind. Christianity may be upheld by arguments drawn from science. Great names in science have done that. It may be defended historically. Great historians have so done. It may be defended by philosophy and logic. Great philosophers and logicians have so defended it. But only a few men are historians, or even in a general sense acquainted with the history of the past, and still fewer are scientists, or logicians and philosophers. And useful as these arguments have been, they are addressed to a comparatively few number of believers. But anything that may be said in behalf of Christianity from the standpoint of common sense has a universal appeal, for all men are gifted with a degree of common sense, and thus are qualified to pass upon any evidence that may be advanced from that source. Nor is any sensible person prejudiced against the evidence of common sense.

What do we mean when we speak of common sense? We mean just what is meant when in discussion with someone, we say to him, "Common sense would tell you that! You don't need to be a historian, a scientist, a philosopher, a logician. Just use your common sense." There are, it is true, times when we are tempted to believe that this so-called "common" sense is, in reality, most uncommon. But what is uncommon is not

the sense, but the use of it. And perhaps there is no field of life in which man makes so little use of common sense as he does in the field of his religious beliefs. It is our purpose, then, to take up, one by one, the cardinal truths of Christianity, and show how they are in harmony with the findings of man's common sense, and how great doctrines, out of which timid Christians have been frightened by oracular utterances of learned unbelievers, may be vindicated by the testimony of that common sense which God has bestowed upon His children.

There is a popular fallacy that the doctrines of Christianity, such as the nature of man, the being of God, the fact of sin, the incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ, and the life to come, are to be received and held only because they have been revealed to us, and in spite of the fact that they may seem to counteract reason. As an example of that fallacy, let me quote this passage from Scott's "Pirate," where one of the two sisters, in answer to the objection that human wisdom was worse than folly when applied to mysteries beyond its comprehension, replied, "I think this doctrine only related to the mysteries of religion, which it is our duty to receive without investigation or doubt, but in things occurring in common life, as God has bestowed reason upon us, we cannot act wrong in employing it." Now,

if this were true, the Christian would find himself very often in serious straits, for if God has revealed to man certain truths for his good, and those same truths cannot be defended by reason and common sense, it is difficult to see how any man could be held accountable for his beliefs or his conduct, for if the revelation has come from God, so also has the reason and the common sense. So far then as is possible, we ought to avoid allowing ourselves to slip into that careless and dangerous habit of pretending to believe what has been revealed to us without regard for the fact that our common sense tells us that what has been revealed is exactly what needed to be revealed and which answers to the necessities of man's nature.

In following this course, we distinctly disavow any effort to undertake the task of what Browning in *Christmas Eve* calls

> Making square to a finite eye
> The circle of infinity,

for we do not forget that, as Pascal said, "The heart hath reasons of its own, of which the mind knows nothing." Nor do we mean to say that man's unaided reason could ever have discovered the truths of Christianity without the revelation, but only that since the laws of Christianity have been revealed, man's common sense approves and confirms those laws. Instead, therefore, of

following the usual method and commencing with the Bible and the Church, and declaring first their record of, and testimony to, Christianity, we shall begin with man and see to what extent the observations of his common sense agree with the truths of revelation.

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY.

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I

Common Sense and Man

WHAT is man? That question is fundamental. We commence with man, for Christianity, which addresses itself to man, presupposes in man a nature fitted to receive the message of Christianity. In order to see whether there is a correlation between man and Christianity, whether the message is suited to the one to whom it is delivered, whether the remedy fits the patient, whether the great music of the Christian revelation can find any response in the heart of man, we must first examine man. It is not hard to do that, for in ourselves we carry all the data that are necessary for our verdict. So far as it is possible, let us try to think of man, of human nature, of ourselves, as though we had never seen a Bible or a church, and knew absolutely nothing of what Christianity has to say about man. To that end imagine, if you will, a visitor coming down from some other world to visit our earth and study the life of man. We need not say that he is another kind of man, but only that he possesses the power of observation and common sense. What would such a visitor have to say about man, about you and me?

(The Celestial enters into conversation with a mortal)

CELESTIAL—By what name do you call yourselves?

MORTAL—We call ourselves "men."

CELESTIAL—I see that some of you are small and helpless, and others strong and active, and others gray and bent and feeble. You must be subject to change. We celestials know nothing of that; we are ever in the strength and prime of our days.

MORTAL—Yes; man is a creature subject to change. He comes into the world absolutely helpless; out of that state he passes into a life of strength and vigor; then, by and by, his natural force begins to abate; he grows weaker and weaker, and finally dies, ceases to move, to think, and goes back to the dust whence he came.

CELESTIAL—And these beasts, these animals that I have seen, do they pass through a similar course?

MORTAL—Yes, so far as their bodies are concerned there seems to be little difference in the history and the fate of man and the beast. One of our wisest men said long ago, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-ëminence above a beast."

CELESTIAL—And do you believe that?

MORTAL—So far as the body is concerned, the wise man was correct.

CELESTIAL—The body? But what more than body is man? You speak as if there were something else to man than this body which is born, grows to manhood, then sinks and decays and goes back to the dust? How can you think that, when, as you yourself confess, you pass through exactly the same changes as the beast? I share the opinion of your wise man whose words you quoted, that man hath no pre-ëminence over the beast.

MORTAL—But you must remember that as yet you have seen very little of man and his ways. Our wise man indeed said that man and the beast fare alike and that one has no pre-eminence over the other. But remember it was the *man* who said this, *not* the beast.

CELESTIAL—What of that?

MORTAL—Everything! The fact that it is the man who comments on his life and compares it with that of the beast, and never the beast who compares his life with that of man, shows that there is a vast difference between man and the beast. Thus, in the very words in which he complained that he was no better than the beast, the wise man showed his infinite superiority, and the immeasurable difference between man and beast.

But let us enter this museum at the university.

CELESTIAL—These ugly bones, what are they?

MORTAL—They are skeletons of man, and the animals said to be nearest to man in structure of body. Several of the skeletons are those of men and several of them those of animals called "apes." Can you tell where the skeletons of the beast end and those of man begin?

CELESTIAL—I cannot tell with certainty, and the fact that I cannot makes me all the more certain that man is no more than a beast, and that all your boasted superiority and difference is only a myth.

MORTAL—We have men who talk about man just as you do, and who write books to prove that man is only a higher sort of beast. But they themselves cannot believe what they write.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because they must acknowledge that it is man who writes about men and beasts, and never the beast. The history of this collection of skeletons, collected by naturalists to prove the theory of man's common nature with a race of beasts, overthrows and disowns the very theory that the collection was supposed to illustrate and demonstrate.

CELESTIAL—How so?

MORTAL—Because it was man and not the beast who collected the skeletons. It was the

creature represented by the last of the skeletons in that line which collected all of them. As to bone, and flesh and blood and eating and drinking, and sleeping and dying, man and the beast may seem much the same, neither having the advantage over the other. But it is always man who is the collector and the commentator; it is always man who has something he wants to illustrate or prove; never the beast. But come with me to the zoölogical gardens, and I will give you an even more striking example of how like man is to the beast and yet how terribly unlike, how infinitely removed from the beast and all its ways. See these animals in this cage.

CELESTIAL—What are they?

MORTAL—They are apes.

CELESTIAL—The creatures whose skeletons we saw with those of men in the museum?

MORTAL—The same.

CELESTIAL—I thought their skeletons very like those of men, but now that I see them alive, and observe their actions, I seem to see an even greater resemblance. Surely they are only another race of men. You have imposed upon me with your arrogant claims of superiority to the beast. Here in the behaviour of these creatures is the refutation of all your fine theories. Why, the disgusting animal uses his hands just like a man; the chief difference seems to be in the tail:

the ape has a tail, whereas man has none; at least, I have as yet observed none.

MORTAL—No; the chief difference is not in the tail.

CELESTIAL—What, then, is it?

MORTAL—The chief difference between the ape and the man is summed up in what you can see with your own eyes: it is always the ape who is *in* the cage, and the man who is *outside*. You may set up skeletons of men and apes against the museum wall; you may draw charts showing the similarity of structure in the hands and feet and jaw and head. But when you have collected all that information and put it down, it amounts to little compared with the fact which too many seem to forget, namely, that it is always man who is on the outside of the cage.

CELESTIAL—And that implies that man, in some respects, as to his physical organism like to the beasts, is, as to his whole being, infinitely unlike the beast, and the supposed likeness only serves to emphasize the terrible unlikeness?

MORTAL—Precisely.

CELESTIAL—Where are we now?

MORTAL—This is a library. Those things you see along the shelves are what we call books.

CELESTIAL—Who wrote them?

MORTAL—Man.

CELESTIAL—Why did he write them? Does he eat them?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—Does he use them for furniture?

MORTAL—Some people do; but that is not what they are for.

CELESTIAL—What are they for?

MORTAL—To read.

CELESTIAL—And what do they read in them?

MORTAL—They read about other men who have lived in past ages. They read about the possible future of man, about his fears, his hatreds, his wars, his sorrows, and about the rivers and the trees and the fruits and the flowers and the stars, and even about the kind of life which may be lived on the world from which you say you have come.

CELESTIAL—What does all this represent?

MORTAL—It represents knowledge.

CELESTIAL—And what is knowledge?

MORTAL—Knowledge is the wisdom of man's mind.

CELESTIAL—Do the ants, or monkeys, or horses, or elephants have any libraries?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—Why don't they write books about the history of their kind, or about man?

MORTAL—They can't do it.

CELESTIAL—Why can't they do it?

MORTAL—Because it is not their nature. Though furnished with all the material for the finest books, the beast never has written a book.

CELESTIAL—I see here the lives of celebrated men. Have the apes, the horses, the eagles, the ants, the lions, or the tigers never written a book about their famous ancestors?

MORTAL—Never. Nor will you find in the earth monuments or statues to celebrated beasts. Only men can build such monuments.

CELESTIAL—This is interesting, but what was your purpose in bringing me into the library? I am here to find out about man as he is today. What has all this to do with man?

MORTAL—It tells you that man has mind and memory and knowledge. This library traces the story of our race back to the very beginning. There you will find that the earliest man of whom we have any trace was in mental and moral qualities the same, in kind, as man today. Man has a history, and is conscious of that history.

CELESTIAL—And the brute is not conscious of any past or any history?

MORTAL—He is not. The cheapest and poorest book in this great library, yes, even a single word in that book, is proof of the immeasurable difference between man and beast, and tells us of man's infinite superiority.

(They enter a court of justice)

CELESTIAL—Who is that black-gowned man sitting on the high seat, with clerks at his side?

MORTAL—The judge.

CELESTIAL—And that unhappy looking man standing before him?

MORTAL—He is the prisoner. He has been convicted of a crime. The judge is about to sentence him.

THE JUDGE—I hereby sentence you to be hanged by the neck until dead. May God have mercy on your soul!

CELESTIAL—He gave command that he should be hanged by the neck until dead? Why such a terrible sentence?

MORTAL—The prisoner committed murder, that is, he took another man's life. Now he must pay the penalty. He did wrong; now he must suffer.

CELESTIAL—But do men know the difference between what you call right and what you call wrong?

MORTAL—Yes; otherwise it would be unjust to punish them. Every man is furnished with a conscience.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—Conscience is that mysterious something within man's soul that lets him see the difference between right and wrong, and when

he has done wrong makes him feel unhappy and when he has done right makes him feel happy.

CELESTIAL—Do the beasts have conscience, laws, and courts of justice?

MORTAL—No; for they have no sense of right and wrong, and no sense of responsibility for conduct.

CELESTIAL—Then men do not try and condemn beasts for what they do?

MORTAL—They do not. That would be absurd, for the beast has no moral nature.

CELESTIAL—I see then why you brought me to the Court House. It was to show me that man has a moral nature?

MORTAL—Precisely.

CELESTIAL—And then every court of justice, and every officer of the law, and every prisoner, and every trial, and every sentence is a monument and testimony to the moral nature of man?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—What meant the stern judge when he said to the prisoner, "May God have mercy on your soul"?

MORTAL—He meant that although the justice of men demanded that the man's physical and bodily life must come to end, only God could deal with the soul.

CELESTIAL—What is the soul?

MORTAL—The soul is the man.

CELESTIAL—Not the body?

MORTAL—No; man has a body, but it is the soul in the body that makes the man.

CELESTIAL—When the poor man is hanged by the neck until dead, his soul will live on just the same?

MORTAL—It will.

CELESTIAL—Will it have another body?

MORTAL—Yes; St. Paul says a "spiritual" body.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—I cannot tell you. Only a man who has put off this mortal body and put on the spiritual body would be able to tell you, and there are no such men on earth.

CELESTIAL—But I found a book in the library in which a wise man said there was no soul, and that death was the end of man?

MORTAL—Yes, I know there are such books and many such men. But that proves nothing. Our common sense tells us that we have a never-dying soul. That one brief sentence of the judge, may God have mercy on your soul, has more weight than all the learned volumes which would tell us that man has no soul. When the judge spoke of the soul he rang a bell that seemed to set another bell ringing in my breast. But we shall talk more of soul and body and life after death again. Come with me to the art gallery.

CELESTIAL—What are these?

MORTAL—Paintings, pictures of men and beasts, and ships and forests, and battles and cities, and fields and houses.

CELESTIAL—I see one painting which interests me above the others.

MORTAL—Which?

CELESTIAL—This one with the building with a cross over it, and the man and woman in the field with their heads bowed. What is the building?

MORTAL—A church, a house of worship.

CELESTIAL—And the cross over it?

MORTAL—That is the sign and symbol of our holy religion. Our Saviour died on a cross.

CELESTIAL—And why have the man and the woman bowed their heads?

MORTAL—A bell in the belfry of the church has just sounded. That bell is called the Angelus, and whenever it begins to ring, men stop working and begin to worship.

CELESTIAL—What does that mean? What is worship?

MORTAL—Worship is man's adoration of God, his creator and his redeemer.

CELESTIAL—Do the beasts worship?

MORTAL—No; man is the only creature who builds an altar and worships God.

CELESTIAL—Why this difference? Did not the same God make both man and beast?

MORTAL—Yes; but He made man in His image.

CELESTIAL—In His image? What mean you?

MORTAL—I mean that God made man with godlike powers and faculties. He made him so that he can worship God, love Him, serve Him, speak with Him, and obey Him.

CELESTIAL—But does man always obey God?

MORTAL—Alas, he does not!

CELESTIAL—From what you have told me and shown me I conclude that man is the greatest thing in the world and unlike all else in the world.

MORTAL—It is so, celestial visitor. Great as thou art, and thy fellow-beings, I do not feel that thou art greater or more wonderful than man. Even in his weakness and sins and sorrows man is incomparably great. Let me tell you before you go back to your own world what some of our greatest men have said about man. I am but a plain man, not eloquent of speech, but I would like you to hear what our great souls have thought of man.

CELESTIAL—Proceed.

MORTAL—This is what Pascal said, in his celebrated *Thoughts,* which I cannot read or repeat too often:

> Man is but a reed, the feeblest thing in nature; but he is a reed that thinks. It needs not that the universe arise to crush him. An exhalation, a drop of water, suffices to destroy him. But were the universe to crush man, man is yet nobler than the universe, for he knows that he dies, and the universe even in prevailing against him, knows not its power.

And this from Carlyle; at the close of his essay on our great Goethe:

> The earth itself will pass away, this little lifeboat of an earth, with its noisy crew of a Mankind, and all their troubled history will one day have vanished; faded like a cloud-speck from the azure of the All! What then is man! He endures but for an hour and is crushed before the moth. Yet in the being and in the working of a faithful man, is there already (as all faith from the beginning gives assurance) a something that pertains not to this wild death element of Time; that triumphs over Time, and is and will be when Time shall be no more.

And this from one of our great poets, Tennyson:

> Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
> Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
> Not make him sure that he shall cease?
>
> Who forged that other influence,
> That heat of inward evidence,
> By which he doubts against the sense?

He owns the fatal gift of eyes
That read his spirit blindly wise,
Not simple as a thing that dies.

Here sits he shaping wings to fly;
His heart forbodes a mystery;
He names the name Eternity.

And this from great Shakespeare:

This majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god!

And last of all, this from our greatest book, the Bible:

And God said, Let us make man in our image.

And this:

What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with honour and glory.

And this:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have life everlasting.

Now, Celestial, you understand why it is always man, and not the beast, who collects the

specimens and gathers the skeletons. Now you know why it is always man who is on the outside of the cage. Now you know why it is that man writes books about himself, about the earth, the beasts, the rocks and the trees and the stars. Now you know why it is that man builds temples of justice, and writes his laws and protects the innocent and punishes the guilty. Now you know why it is that man thinks he has a soul and can never die, and why man alone of all created things bows down to worship and to pray. Now you know why it is that God thought so much of man that He sent His only Son to die for him. That fact, Celestial, of which I hope to tell you more again, the fact that God gave His Son to suffer and die for man, is the supreme demonstration of the worth of man, and tells me how it is better that I should suffer every bitter pang that this earthly tabernacle can know and endure every loss that time inflicts upon men, than do wrong or sin against God.

II

Common Sense and God

I CAN well imagine someone saying, "Why take time to argue for the existence of God? Everybody assumes that God is, and if there are those who do not believe in God, argument and discussion will never convince them. Let us pass on to a more profitable theme." But, to quote the words of a celebrated defender of the doctrine of God, "Occasions will arise to try the firmness of our most habitual opinions; and upon these occasions it is a matter of incalculable use to feel our foundation, to find a support in argument for what we had taken on authority." Not many, if any, of us will get through life without having the firmness of our most habitual faith in God severely tried. At such an hour it may be a source of comfort to us to consider the reasonableness of belief in God, and how that reasonableness cannot be shaken by the successive assaults of sorrow or pain or those thousand ills to which man is heir. The reasonableness of faith in God is not hard to show. There is a feeling in some quarters that the moment we begin to talk about this high theme, we are lost in a maze of speculation and dim uncertainty. Even before

we set out on our quest, we are assured of its hopelessness, and a contrast is drawn between the clearness of science and the darkness of theology and faith. Mr. Arthur J. Balfour in his book, *The Foundations of Belief,* refers to this when he writes that there are "men who represent science as a land of Goshen, bright beneath the unclouded splendor of the midday sun, while religion lies beyond, wrapped in the impenetrable darkness of the Egyptian plague." It is indeed true that no man hath at any time seen God, and that if clearness means physical and material perception, then religion is indeed a land of darkness, as of darkness itself, and where even the light is as darkness. But if there are things not seen, as well as things visible, and which, in contrast with the seen, are eternal, and, if, as all history goes to prove, man has a religious nature, then it is reasonable to expect, and examination will confirm that expectation, that man will be able to discover solid reasons for believing in God. Great is the mystery of godliness. We cannot dispel that mystery, and would not if we could; nor do we by searching expect to find out God to perfection, for that may be the delight and the occupation of the endless cycles of eternity; but God hath not left us without a witness, and it would be a strange thing indeed, if God is, and man has a nature suited to belief in

God and worship of Him, and yet man is not able to give a good account of his "most reasonable" faith that is in him. Our task, then, is to find out what common sense has to say about this Christian doctrine of God, for just as Christianity presupposes a certain doctrine of man, so it assumes the existence of God. Is that assumption to be justified at the bar of man's common sense?

In our inquiry concerning the nature of man, we imagined a visitor from another world coming down to our planet and studying man and arriving at certain well-defined beliefs about man's nature: that he is an animal, the cleverest, and monarch of them all; that he differs not in degree but in kind from the brutes which perish, for he has knowledge and will and a capacity for change and development, always restlessly stretching out to some new thing; that he has a moral nature and distinguishes between good and evil; that he thinks he has a soul which never dies; that he has as the crown of his being a belief in God whom he worships and adores. We can imagine the interest his report would arouse in his own world, particularly this last observation about man's faith in a God whom he has never seen. In order to get more information on the subject, the messenger is commanded to return to terrestrial regions and mundane habita-

tions and ascertain what reasons man has for believing in God.

Arrived once more upon the earth, this visitor comes to me and says to me, "We, in our far-off world, would know more about this One whom you call God and whom I saw the people worshipping in the church. What is this God whom you worship? Have you ever seen Him?"

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because God is a Spirit.

CELESTIAL—What is a spirit?

MORTAL—A spirit has personality; that is, it has will, knowledge, power.

CELESTIAL—Then you are a God, for you have all these attributes.

MORTAL—No, I am not God, for although having mind and will and purpose and power, I am a finite spirit, but God is infinite. There is no end to His goodness, His wisdom, His purpose, His power.

CELESTIAL—Then God is perfection?

MORTAL—Yes; I am a spirit, but He is the Father of Spirits. He is infinite in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

CELESTIAL—That would indeed be a wonderful being. But what are your reasons for thinking there is such a being?

MORTAL—In the first place, because men have universally believed in God. They have not all had the same high conception of the one and true God that men now have, but they always had some thought of God and belief in Him. The black men, the red men, the yellow men, the modern man, the medieval man, the ancient man, all believed in God and had their forms of worship.

CELESTIAL—Then you think that because men have always believed there is a God, there must be a God?

MORTAL—Yes; I cannot account for the idea being so universal if there is no God. Moreover, the idea of God seems to be a necessary one: as the keystone in yonder bridge holds up the arch, so the idea of God holds together the whole moral system of mankind.

CELESTIAL—But I have found men in your universities here who believe that the planet Mars is inhabited. I passed it on my way to earth and there is not a thing that breathes or grows on it. Because men think it is inhabited does not make it inhabited, and because men think there is a God, and have always thought so, is no proof that there is a God.

MORTAL—I did not say that it was a proof. I do not pretend to prove there is a God. All I say is that to me, in my limited knowledge, the

fact of God is the only way to account for the belief in Him.

CELESTIAL—I have been reading your histories and I discover that all men once believed that the earth was flat and that the sun moved round the earth, and that if you kept on sailing on the ocean you would drop into a hole where the sun disappeared. But that didn't make the earth flat or the sun move round the earth. You do not mean to tell me that the only way to account for all men believing that the earth was flat and that the sun moved round the earth is the fact that the earth is flat? And why then quote the general belief in God as a reason for His existence?

MORTAL—What you say does not trouble me. It is true that men were mistaken about the earth and may be mistaken now about the heavenly bodies. But it was natural for man to think that the earth was flat and the sun moved round the earth, for so it still seems to the eye of man. If you never taught the child of the most learned astronomer otherwise, he would grow up believing that it was so. But the idea of God is different. The wrong ideas of man about the earth were natural mistakes; education changes them and affords a better explanation of the earth. But no amount of education does away with the idea of God. Men had to know their own earth

before they could have had even wrong notions about Mars; they had to know what a flat surface was before they imagined that the earth was flat; they had to see things really move before they thought the sun moved round the earth. How then could they have even false ideas of God if there is no God?

CELESTIAL—What you say appeals to me; but I came across a learned man in your city who says there is no God, and that a man who believes in God is either ignorant, and believes because he doesn't know any better, or he is dishonest, pretending to believe in God when he knows there is no such being. How do you explain that?

MORTAL—I cannot explain it. But one man's disbelief does not shake my belief. It seems to me, too, that such a man denies himself, for before he could say there is no God, the idea of God had to be in his mind; and the idea of God is that than which there is no higher. But there is something higher than the idea of God who does not exist, and that is God Himself. So it makes no difference to me, so far as evidence for God is concerned, whether I see a man on his knees praying, or singing a psalm, or offering a sacrifice, or writing a book to prove that there is no God; either one, the believer or the unbeliever, bears testimony to the existence of God. If you

look about you will find that all we mortals who live on this earth have an idea of imperfection. We say that we are weak, that we are mortal, that we are ignorant. But when we say so, we compare ourselves with a standard of strength and immortality and complete wisdom. We know the imperfect only as we relate it to the perfect. Yet it does not seem reasonable that the imperfect could have originated the idea of perfection; that the ignorant could have originated the idea of complete knowledge; that mortality could have originated the idea of immortality.

CELESTIAL—You mean that this idea must have come from the Perfect One Himself, or God?

MORTAL—That is what I mean. How else could it have come? As one of our poets has said,

> That type of perfect in his mind
> In Nature can he nowhere find.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean by "Nature"? I have heard a great deal about Nature since I came to earth.

MORTAL—By Nature I mean the universe; all the worlds and all the things and creatures in the worlds. Nature is only a name for an effect whose cause is God. If you look about

you, you will see that everything which is was made so by something else. These buildings that you see were built by man. Those great rocks that we saw in the meadow were carried here by some strange power beyond the power of man. The geologists tell us that this whole country was once invaded by vast heaps of ice and snow which filled up rivers and ploughed out new lakes and seas, and then when the ice began to melt and retreat, the great boulders which had traveled south with the ice were left here without any means of getting back to where they came from. That is only one instance of how you must account for everything you see by some other cause than itself.

CELESTIAL—What you mean to tell me, then, is that the world is a great effect that must have had a cause, that the world must have had a beginning and therefore must have had a Beginner. But is it not possible to think of matter, the world's material, although in different form, as existing from all eternity, as never having had a beginning, and then no need of a Beginner?

MORTAL—Here my only answer is that of common sense. After all investigations have been pursued as far as they can be pushed, man must still make use of his common sense. If a brick hits me on the head, I do not imagine that that brick must have been flying through space

from all eternity, but that it must have been started in its flight just as truly as my head stopped it in its flight, and I look for the man who started it. The ancients explained the world like this: The world rests on the elephant, the elephant on the turtle and the turtle on the jelly-fish.

CELESTIAL—But on what did the jelly fish rest?

MORTAL—Ah, there you have asked the question that has never been answered, for it would be absurd to answer that the jelly fish rested on itself.

CELESTIAL—And what do men say today?

MORTAL—Some of them talk about what they call the nebular hypothesis.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—It is a noble tribute to the power of man's mind and his ability to scan the heavens. It assumes that the solar system, our universe, was once a vast mass of hot substance called nebula, and the central portion of it was what is now the sun. This mass began to move and rotate; as it cooled, it began to contract toward the center and therefore began to move more quickly, and as it moved, parts of this original mass of nebula began to break off in a series of rings and finally cooled from gas into liquid form, and thus came our solar system.

CELESTIAL—But who supplied the original nebula and who started the motion?

MORTAL—That has never been explained.

CELESTIAL—What other reason than that of the necessity of a first cause have you for believing in God?

MORTAL—Because of the evidences of a plan and a purpose in the world. Not only was the world made by someone, but it was made by one who had a purpose and a plan.

CELESTIAL—How can you show that?

MORTAL—Come with me to the church and I will show you what we call a pipe organ. This tablet on the front of the organ is made of brass; these pipes in front are made of lead, and behind are very large pipes that are made of wood. The wires are made of copper, the nails are made of steel, the keys are made of ivory, the bellows are made of leather, and the stops are made of felt. Here is the handle that turns on an electric current; that current of electricity starts the motor in the cellar, and the motor pumps wind in the air chests, and now when I tilt this tablet the air is released from the air chest and breathes upon this reed, and that meeting of the air and the reed produces a pleasing sound or tone. I touch this tablet and I hear a gentle sigh like that of the wind in the branches of the fir trees after sunset on a summer night. I touch this tablet

and I hear the *vox humana* which speaks to me as if some man or woman or little child were hidden in the pipes and were calling to me. I touch this tablet and I hear the music of the fife; this one, and I start at the shrill challenge of the trumpet; this one, and I hear a sound like that of bells at evening pealing, now ringing out the joy of marriage, now summoning men to worship God, now tolling the last low requiem for the dead; this one, and the entrancing melody of the harp steals through the room; this one, and every one of the hundreds of pipes mingle their voices in a deep harmony that makes the walls of the church to vibrate and its dome to echo with the "Doxology" or "Rock of Ages."

CELESTIAL—But whence came this organ? I understand that an elephant must have been killed in Africa for the ivory of the keys, and sheep sheared for the wool of the stops, and iron and copper and lead dug out of the bowels of the earth for the several parts, and cattle slain for the leather, and trees felled for the wood. There was a cause, or a number of causes, that produced this effect you call the organ. But is it not possible that these different materials just happened to get together and thus accidentally created an organ?

MORTAL—No; my common sense tells me that is not possible. You might pile wood and

iron and brass and lead and copper and wool and ivory together for a thousand years and you would never produce an organ.

CELESTIAL—Then how came this organ?

MORTAL—First, there was the thought of it and the desire of it in the mind of one who wished to commemorate the life and affection of a good man. Then the builder of the organ collected his material and put together the great instrument, and in all that vast fabric, there is not a nail, a wire, a piece of wood, or steel, or lead, or copper, or ivory, that is not in the very place it was intended to be, and arranged with reference to the other parts in the very manner planned by the builder. The organ came from the love of man's heart and the wisdom of man's mind. If we can say that for an organ, what shall we say for the world?

CELESTIAL—But does the organ never get out of order? Do these pipes never cipher? Do they not sometimes produce discord instead of harmony?

MORTAL—That is true; but that has never made me imagine that, therefore, the organ did not have a builder who had a plan and a purpose, and that his purpose was not discord but harmony, not silence but music.

CELESTIAL—Then you think that man must have been made by God, and the fact of man can

be explained only by the fact of a good and wise God, in spite of man's sin and suffering. Can you explain this in any other way?

MORTAL—The best way I know is that of Paley. Paley was an Englishman who lived during the 18th century and wrote two celebrated books, one on *Natural Theology* and the other on *Evidences of Christianity*. There was a time when he was widely read because he put his arguments in such a way, and drew them from such a source, that while they appealed to the understanding and common sense of the ordinary man, they also gained new luster from the investigations of the learned. Nowadays men laugh at "Paley's Savage" picking up a watch, and his reason for believing in God is said to be out of date. But I think that better than any other man who has ever talked about God, he has clearly stated those reasons which appeal to the common sense of mankind.

CELESTIAL—What is that argument?

MORTAL—It is found in the first chapter of his book on *Natural Theology* and had a deserved fame, but you rarely meet a man, not even among those who laugh at it, who has ever read it. It is like this: A man is crossing a stony heath and strikes his foot against a stone. He asks himself how that stone came to be there, and answers that, for anything he knows, it has

lain there forever. But a little farther on his foot strikes against a watch lying on the ground and he stoops to pick it up and examines it carefully. He asks himself how the watch came to be there, and the answer that he had given for the stone's being there never occurs to him. Why? Because when he examines the watch he finds what he did not find in the stone, that its several parts have been framed and put together for a purpose, that they are so adjusted as to produce motion, and that the motion is so regulated as to point to the hour of the day. If the parts had been of a different size, or arranged in a different manner, either no motion would have been produced, or when produced would not have answered the use now served by the motion. After he has looked at the spring and the wheels and the wires and the brass and the glass, he concludes that the watch must have had a maker who formed it for the purpose of keeping time. Nor would he be shaken in that conclusion if he happened to discover that the watch sometimes stopped, or sometimes went wrong, or if there were parts in the watch that he didn't understand, and he would be very much surprised to hear that anyone would say the watch was the result of chance or was produced by a law of metals or a law of time, for having kept his eyes open in the world, he has observed that

things that are designed to do a certain work have come from the mind of a designer. Neither would he be frightened out of his conviction by being told that he knew nothing about the matter, for while there is much he doesn't know about the watch, that which he does not know will not cancel what he does know, namely, that the watch shows purpose and design and must have had an intelligent maker. He takes the watch with him, and by and by, to his great surprise, discovers that the watch has the property of producing in the course of its movements another watch just like itself, and that only increases his wonder at the skill and wisdom of the man who made the first watch, for while in a sense the second watch was made by the first watch, its real maker was the mind that made the first watch, so that it not only kept time, but could produce another watch just like itself.

CELESTIAL—But if the second watch was made by the first, is it not possible that that first watch he found was made by another watch, and that in turn by another, and so on indefinitely? Then you have no reason to think there was a mind and a hand that made the first watch, but that watches have just gone on producing watches from all eternity. What do you say to this?

MORTAL—I say, in the first place, even if

such an infinite series of watches could be imagined, common sense tells me there must have been a first watch, a Number One, somewhere. But the question is not—"Was there a first watch?" but "Who, or what, is responsible for the plan and purpose that I observe in the watch I now possess?"

CELESTIAL—What you mean, then, by your argument is this: That man is a being whose body and mind show an intelligent design and purpose, and that although one man may be able to produce another man, and so on until the human race is lost in the mists of antiquity, perhaps, as some think, in a lower race of animals, still that does not account for the wisdom and the device that we now observe in the ordinary man.

MORTAL—That is precisely what I mean.

CELESTIAL—Then Paley is not altogether out of date?

MORTAL—No; not until common sense is out of date.

CELESTIAL—Have you anything else to say along this line of purpose and design? I am sure it will arouse great interest when I make my report in my own world.

MORTAL—Yes; I have told you about the reasons for believing in God as we have them in the investigations of a man of science; now——

CELESTIAL—But I have discovered some very great men of science in your world who know far more than Paley did, for they reap the benefit of the progress of learning since, and some of them say there is no God. What they know about the body doesn't convince them of God.

MORTAL—I am afraid that is true. There are such. But nothing that they have ever discovered has ever explained either how a watch that keeps time could have existed from all eternity, or how it could have made itself.

CELESTIAL—What you mean, then, is that while they have ceased to believe in God, they haven't discovered anyone to take God's place? Very well; let me hear more of this.

MORTAL—I started to tell you of the opinion, not of a wise man, but of a little child, for sometimes God hides things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes. James Beatie was a Scotch poet who lived in the 18th century. His eldest son died at the age of twenty-two years. He was a youth of no ordinary talent and left behind a considerable body of prose and poetry. Four years after his death, his heartbroken father published these essays and poems, and in an exquisite biographical sketch attached to them, tells this most interesting story about the religious education of his son, and I will repeat the story for you, for it

answers very fully your question as to why I think there must be a God. He says:

> The doctrines of religion I wished to impress on his mind as soon as it might be prepared to receive them; but I did not see the propriety of making him commit to memory theological sentences, or any sentences, which it was not possible for him to understand. And I was desirous to make a trial how far his own reason could go in tracing out, with a little direction, the great and first principle of all religion, the being of God. The following fact is mentioned, not as a proof of superior sagacity in him (for I have no doubt that most children would in like circumstances think as he did) but merely as a moral or logical experiment. He had reached his fifth (or sixth) year, knew the alphabet, and could read a little; but had received no particular information with respect to the Author of his being; because I thought he could not yet understand such information; and because I had learned, from my own experience, that to be made to repeat words not understood, is extremely detrimental to the faculties of a young mind. In a corner of a little garden, without informing any person of the circumstances, I wrote in the mould, with my finger, the three initial letters of his name; and sowing garden-cresses in the furrows, covered up the seed and smoothed the ground. Ten days after, he came running to me, and with astonishment in his countenance, told me that his name was growing in the garden. I smiled at the report and seemed inclined to disregard it; but he insisted

on my going to see what had happened. "Yes," said I carelessly, on coming to the place, "I see it is so; but there is nothing in this worth notice; it is mere chance"; and I went away. He followed me, and, taking hold of my coat, said, with some earnestness, it could not be mere chance; for that somebody must have contrived matters so as to produce it. (I pretend not to give his words, or my own, for I have forgotten both; but I give the substance of what passed between us in such language as we both understood.) "So you think," I said, "that what appears so regular as the letters of your name cannot be by chance?" "Yes," said he, with firmness, "I think so." "Look at yourself," I replied, "and consider your hands and fingers, your legs and feet, and other limbs; are they not regular in their appearance, and useful to you?" He said they were. "Came you then hither," said I, "by chance?" "No," he answered, "that cannot be; something must have made me." "And who is that something," I asked. He said he did not know. (I took particular notice, that he did not say, as Rousseau fancies a child in like circumstances would say, that his parents made him.) I had now gained the point I aimed at; and saw that his reason taught him (though he could not so express it) that what begins to be must have a cause, and that what is formed with regularity must have an intelligent cause. I therefore told him the name of the Great Being who made him and all the world, concerning whose adorable nature I gave him such information as I thought he could in some measure comprehend. The lesson affected

him greatly, and he never forgot it either, or the circumstance that introduced it.

CELESTIAL—I feel convinced now that man has a very good reason for believing in God. At first it seemed absurd and ridiculous, but after what you have told me, I feel it would be absurd and ridiculous if man did not believe in God. But before I return to my own world, is there anything else you care to tell me?

MORTAL—Yes. I have not mentioned the chief reason for this belief in God. I have only led up to it.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—The fact of man's moral nature. On your last visit, when we went to the Court House, we saw a man sentenced to death for committing a crime. You thought it strange, but I tried to explain to you that the man had done what we call wrong, and that it was right to punish him for the doing of the wrong because he knew the difference between right and wrong, and yet chose the wrong. All that was done by authority of law, and men have devised laws by which to govern themselves, because men recognize that there is a right and a wrong, a good and an evil. Man, then, has a moral nature; his sense of right and wrong shows that he is related to something more than flesh and blood and what is seen with the eye.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—A moral law.

CELESTIAL—Please explain.

MORTAL—Very well. Come with me to another building.

CELESTIAL—What is this?

MORTAL—This is a theater.

CELESTIAL—And what is a theater?

MORTAL—It is a place where the emotions and the character of man are pictured.

CELESTIAL—Why does that woman rub her hand and keep saying, "Out, out, damned spot! Who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him!"

MORTAL—That woman is Lady Macbeth who has murdered the king Duncan. Now she can't sleep and walks abroad this way in the night, and rubs her hand. She thinks the spot is on her hand, but it is on her soul. Her conscience troubles her. A voice is telling her that she is a murderess, that she has done a wicked thing and that one day it will be discovered, and she will be punished either in this life or in the next. That is what we call conscience, and conscience must be accounted for. Some men say that conscience differs; that a man in Africa can do, without the least discomfort, a deed which would make me suffer in spirit; and others say that conscience is only the custom which has

arisen by the experience of mankind. But the thing that perplexes me and that must be accounted for, is not that my conscience condemns what my neighbor's approves, but that conscience does condemn and does approve, and that with no regard for the will of man. Whether conscience was implanted at the beginning, or has been developed through time, whether it is primary or derivative, it must be accounted for —the pain and sorrow that it brings to men, and that "peace above all earthly dignities" which it bestows upon man's soul.

One of the world's remarkable books is J. J. Rousseau's *Confession.* In the early part of the book he tells us that the book was undertaken as an act of expiation for a sin committed when he was a lad. After he fled from Geneva, he went down into Italy and secured a position as secretary to an Italian lady. After her death, he fancied a pink and silver ribbon that one of the ladies had worn, and stole it. It was discovered in his possession, and asked to give an account of it, he said that Marian, one of the maids, had given it to him. The maid was summoned and tearfully protested her innocence, while Rousseau, possessed with evil, stoutly maintained that she had given him the ribbon. The look, he says, which the girl turned on him, would have melted the heart of a demon. The

investigator dismissed them, saying, "Conscience by its suffering will revenge the innocent." He lived to see that prophecy terribly fulfilled. The thought that he had unjustly accused the girl, that perhaps he had driven her to darkness and to shame, cut his soul with an edge that forty years had not been able to dull. Often in his sleep he would start up as he fancied he saw the pleading eyes and the tear-stained face of the maid he had wronged. In the most successful period of his life, the ghost would leave him for a little, but only to return when his fortunes were low, for he discovered that "remorse sleeps during prosperity, but wakes amid the storms of adversity." How can we account for that tragedy of remorse and conscience?

We cannot account for conscience by flesh and blood, by stone and dust, by birth or death. We can account for it only on the ground that there is a God who is Himself infinitely holy and has made man to know the difference between good and evil, and by speaking in his conscience encourages men to do good and warns him against doing evil, and reminds him that God is his Judge and that one day he must appear before Him and give an account of what he has thought, or said, or done. Conscience is the glass through which I see God. I believe in God because I find myself thinking about God,

and find that all men have thought about Him. I believe in God because I see that nothing comes to pass without something to make it come to pass, and since the world is, someone must have made it. I believe in God because I see how fearfully and wonderfully I am made, each organ fitted to the instinct, and each instinct fitted to the organ, but neither explaining the other. I believe in God because I am struck with the order and progression of this great world in which I live and where I ask myself questions about God. I believe in God because I marvel at the power that is seen in the world. If I should weigh the universe, and then add together all the strength of all the millions who live in it now, and then add to that all the energy of all the countless beings of those generations which have come and gone like the leaves of the forest, I would find that all that accumulated power could not so much as move this earth a single foot in a thousand years; and yet, during the brief time in which I have been speaking to you, there has not been a minute in which this earth, upheld by some unseen and mighty hand, has not plunged forward into space a thousand miles. But most of all, I believe in God because when I have done evil, when I have been false, or mean, or cruel, or cowardly, or impure, I have been unhappy. Neither work, nor music, nor

books, nor meat, nor drink, could make me happy. But when I have done good, when I have cheered some fainting soul, when I have lost money rather than do a dishonest thing, when I have lost fame rather than stoop to meanness, when I have suffered rather than lie, I have felt happy. The sun seemed to shine a little brighter, life seemed a little more worth living, work seemed a little easier and heaven a little nearer than it had ever been before. And you could never persuade me that there is no God, for I hear God speaking to me in my own heart, and saying to me, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

III

Common Sense and Sin and Pain

IF TEN MEN of acknowledged reading and literary discernment were gathered together and asked to name the greatest poem that our race has produced, I suppose the majority of the ten, if not all of them, would vote for the Book of Job. That marvelous composition, so sublime in thought, so rich in imagination, so deep and catholic in its feeling, addresses itself to the great problem of human suffering, and how it can be reconciled with faith in a God who is good. Forty-two chapters of that matchless drama of human life come to a close without the slightest suggestion as to how man can solve the mystery of suffering. The theories and the suppositions of Job's friends and advisers are, indeed, repudiated; but not a single one of Job's questions is answered. Instead of that, the book concludes with God asking Job questions, and before the revelation of the majesty and mystery of God, Job prostrates himself in the dust of repentance. Where Job failed, what can we do? Why set out on this hopeless quest from which so many have returned baffled and disappointed? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst

thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" These questions carry their own answer with them. If it were our purpose to see what light Christianity has to throw upon this mystery, I might indeed speak with all boldness; for the humblest and most unlettered follower of Jesus has a better right to speak on the subject of pain and evil than even the gifted and inspired author of the book of Job, for life and immortality have been brought to light in the Gospel, and things that were hid from the wise and prudent sages of antiquity have been revealed unto babes and sucklings. Yet, it is to be recalled that the contribution of Christianity to this problem was not the contribution of an explanation, but rather that of an assurance of the love of God. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me. If it were not so, I would have told you." But even if it had been otherwise, even if Christianity answered plainly all the questions which were asked by Job, and which still go up from the troubled breast of humanity, I would not be at liberty to tell those answers now, for our plan which we pursue is to discover what man's common sense and common observation of life have to say about these matters, and then find out how that agrees with the revelation of Christianity.

The problem of suffering is the most ancient of problems and yet it is the most modern. There are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, sick men, disappointed men, wronged men, broken-hearted men, who today have asked in the universal language of sorrow all that Job asked as he sat disconsolate on his heap of ashes in the Land of Uz. So long as life has sin and sorrow, and pain and disappointment, these questions will continue to break from the lips of men. The most dangerous doubts, after all, do not come from Germany, nor are they suggested by the unearthing of a Babylonian tablet, or the investigations of the biologist, or the psychologists, but they are arising every day out of the common experience of mankind. And here, too, on the part of unbelief, is the chief point of attack. The conflict between faith and unbelief finally settles down to this question—Can this world and this life, as we see it, have come from a God who is good and whose goodness still extends to it? It is easy to be frightened by first appearances, and many have stumbled and faltered and fallen because they permitted themselves to be frightened out of their faith. They forgot that the evidence was not all on one side, and that for every suggestion of unbelief, there are a thousand suggestions of faith and hope. Moreover, although the solution belongs to eternity and not

to time, to the Infinite and not to the finite, it is the high privilege and duty of man to try to vindicate the ways of God to himself and to his fellow men, for even though a mantle of the deepest obscurity lay over the question of His existence, this would not efface the distinction between the piety on the one hand which labored and aspired after Him, and the impiety on the other hand which never missed the evidence that it did not care for, and so groveled in the midst of its own sensuality and selfishness.

On his first visit, our messenger from the unknown world discovered what man was; on his second, he found that man had good and sufficient grounds for his belief in God. He is about to return to his own habitations and make his report there to his august monarch and his fellow celestials, when walking through the streets of the city, we see a group of men gathered about a horse that has fallen on the pavement. He is unable to rise, for one of his legs is fractured, and the bone protrudes from the covering of the flesh, disclosing a hideous wound. Presently a policeman appears, and drawing a revolver, shoots the horse in the head and it falls back dead. My heavenly interlocutor, who has stood silent during this tragedy of the streets, now turns to me with a strange look in his face and asks:

CELESTIAL—Why did the man in uniform shoot the fallen horse?

MORTAL—Because the horse is in misery.

CELESTIAL—What is misery?

MORTAL—The horse is suffering pain. His leg is broken. You probably have no such thing as pain or suffering in your world, and it may be difficult for you to understand what I mean. But you could see from the struggles of the horse and the look in his eye that he was in great pain.

CELESTIAL—Did the horse want to break his leg, or did the driver or the owner want to break it?

MORTAL—No; the horse slipped on the ice and fell. It was what we call an accident.

CELESTIAL—Are there many such accidents, and is there much of what you call pain, that strange thing I saw in the horse's eye, in your world?

MORTAL—Yes; I am sorry to say that there is a great deal of it. In fact, all animals and all men and women and children suffer more or less pain before they get through with their life on earth. The whole creation, the whole world, one of our great souls has said, "groaneth and travaileth together in pain."

CELESTIAL—But I thought you all believed that God made the world?

MORTAL—So we do.

CELESTIAL—But if God made the world and all that therein is, why did He make a world with so much pain and suffering in it? Is your God in whom you believe a good God?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Is He almighty?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Well, then, if God is almighty, He could have a world without pain?

MORTAL—I suppose He could.

CELESTIAL—And if, nevertheless, He permits pain and has made the world so, it must be His plan for the world?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Then it seems to me either your God is not all-loving, or He is not almighty, for if He is all-loving, why does He not stop the suffering? Or is He not almighty and therefore cannot stop it? Either He would like to stop it but can't, or He can stop it and won't. In either case, God is now altogether different from what I at first had thought Him to be, and was about to report Him to be to my own world. It looks now as if there were no God, or if there is a God that He is not a good God or all-powerful.

MORTAL—It is not strange that you have felt this way. I am glad that you raised this question before you returned, else on a subsequent visit you might have come upon suffering

in this world and then thought that I had deceived you and tried to hide the real facts of life from you. Since ever man has been able to think, he has asked the very questions that you have been asking. But in spite of that difficulty, the earth is filled with thousands upon thousands who believe that God is, and that He is both almighty and all-loving. He could not be God unless He were so. You have had this question suggested to you by the sufferings of a horse, and to begin at the beginning, let us commence with the sufferings of what we call the "dumb" animals. We call them dumb not because they can't speak, but merely because they don't speak our language. In the first place, while there is a great deal of pain and suffering among the creatures, it is as nothing when compared with the amount of health and strength and joy and pleasure that they enjoy. You have fastened your attention upon this one poor horse which the men are now carting off to be buried or burned. But look up the street! You see hundreds of horses patiently drawing their loads or running briskly in front of carriages, and only this one is fallen. Looking at the one horse, you forget the one hundred on their feet. And even in the life of this one horse, the hours of health and strength he enjoyed were many, many times that of the ten minutes of pain he suffered.

There were days when he frisked in the fields in the country, grazing at his mother's side, a very picture of joy and happiness; then many years of service, well fed, and let us hope, well treated by his master. You must consider this when you ask if God could be responsible for the life of the horse. The same is true, not only of horses, but of all created things. Go abroad in the earth, follow the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea and the rivers, and the wild beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, and you will discover that the great majority of them are at this moment happy and contented, some of them leaping with the mere pleasure of living, some eagerly pursuing their prey; the eagle poised aloft in the empyrean, the pike floating in his deep pool, the lion resting in his shady solitude; and those that go in companies, the sheep, the cattle, the birds, all equally happy and free from pain. It is true that all endure some pain before they finish their life, and some of them are destroyed by others, but you must remember that the sufferings of the animals are scattered over millions of creatures. You are apt to make the mistake of looking at the whole suffering of Nature as if it were one, endured by one life. Then, not only do men exaggerate the extent of pain, but they exaggerate the intensity of it. You and I are different from the beasts.

Just what you are, I do not yet know, but from the questions you ask, you must be more like man than like the beasts. You and I look at the struggling horse and the crushed serpent and the frozen sparrow as if they were human beings and suffered in the same way. Men have even talked about the suffering of ants and insects as if their sufferings were the same as man's. They have said,

> The poor beetle that we tread upon
> In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
> As when a giant dies.

But that is nonsense. It is the fact of man's moral nature that makes suffering so hard for him. With him, the worst in pain is the expectation of it, and the dread of it, and the mental distress which it occasions. But we are mistaken when we think of the beast suffering just as the man does.

CELESTIAL—You mean that if the question of the goodness of God is to be looked at in the light of the suffering in the world, we must look at both sides, the pleasure as well as the pain, the joy as well as the suffering, and that the former vastly outbulks the latter?

MORTAL—Precisely.

CELESTIAL—Oh, the real question then is, not, How could God make a world with suffering in it? but, How could God make a world in

which pain and pleasure both exist, but where the pleasure far outweighs the pain?

MORTAL—Yes, that is the only fair and honest way to state the question.

CELESTIAL—But what was it you said about one animal destroying another? The horse was hurt by accident, but does one horse kill another?

MORTAL—No; but there are plenty of animals that do.

CELESTIAL—Please show me such a creature.

(We walk into the country on a summer evening after sunset)

MORTAL—We ought to see a rabbit about this lane. They like to come out on the road after the sun has set because the road is warmer than their home in the bushes.

CELESTIAL—What is that I see now?

MORTAL—There is the rabbit, and a young one. How innocent and graceful he is! No wonder little children love them. But he will have to be careful for he has many enemies, snakes, dogs and bad men. There! Look at that long gliding thing that has come out of the hedge.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—A rattlesnake.

CELESTIAL—What will it do?

MORTAL—Wait! Unless the rabbit sees him,

the snake will kill him. Now! He is coiling himself so as to be ready. See the wicked gleam in his eyes! He must wait until the rabbit comes within a certain distance, for he can strike just as far as his body is long. There! The rabbit sees him, but it is too late. His fangs are buried in his little body near the throat. Now he crushes him and now he swallows him. But now I will kill the snake.

CELESTIAL—Why did you kill the snake? Because it killed the rabbit?

MORTAL—No. Because I hate him and fear him; there is enmity between me and the snake. I loathe them and abhor them. But he can't be blamed for killing the rabbit.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because that is his means of living. You see these fangs? They are supplied with a poisonous fluid kept in a sack in the snake's head. The snake knows how deadly that poison is, and with it he poisons his victim.

CELESTIAL—You mean that the snake was created so that he was to get his food by first poisoning and then devouring other animals?

MORTAL—Yes; it would seem so.

CELESTIAL—That is horrible. That is far worse than the horse with the broken limb, for that, you showed me, was an accident. But the death and suffering of this rabbit was by design.

The snake is made so that he lives in that terrible way; his fangs and jaws were so arranged. Why, this is a dreadful world! Is there much of this going on? Do many animals kill and eat other animals?

MORTAL—Yes, that is going on everywhere. As one of our poets has said, "Nature is red in tooth and claw and ravine." And as another has said:

> Then marked he too
> How lizard fed on ant, and snake on him;
> Each slew a slayer, and in turn was slain,
> Life living on death. So the fair show
> Veiled one vast, savage, grim conspiracy
> Of mutual murder, from worm to man,
> Who himself kills his fellows.

CELESTIAL—And yet you mean to tell me that you believe in a wise God who created the world and a good God who still rules over it?

MORTAL—I do. This is a natural world. We have nothing to do with any other kind of world. In this natural world, life supports life, and death, which at first seems so terrible, especially the kind of death you have seen, makes way for life. If there were no such device for checking life, and no such order of one life supplanting another, existence would be intolerable. The destruction that we see in life goes hand in hand with the necessary reduction of life. If one ani-

mal, let us say one rabbit, lived forever, the sum and total of its joy would be far less than that of successive generations of rabbits. Mind you, I do not pretend to say that God could not have made some other kind of world, or why He did not, but only that, looking at the facts of the world as we see it, there is evidence of the goodness of God. Remember we deal with a natural world and not an imaginary world. If beasts did not prey thus one on another, they would drag out a miserable old age, and dying thus, would soon make the earth uninhabitable for either man or beast. After all, it is not so easy to improve on the method and order we see in the world as some men seem to imagine.

CELESTIAL—But still this question of animal suffering troubles me. They are not punished because they have done evil?

MORTAL—No; they suffered and died long before sin came into the world. Men used to say that their suffering and death were anticipatory of the suffering and death that came by the sin of man. But that is not necessary. All we know is that the world is built on the plan of life and death, pleasure and suffering.

CELESTIAL—You have told me about the beasts. But what about man? Does he suffer pain, too?

MORTAL—Yes, and far more than the beasts,

because the higher the creature, the more intense his sufferings.

CELESTIAL—What is that sound?

MORTAL—An ambulance is coming. Someone has been injured. They are lifting him into the wagon and will take him to a hospital to have his injuries dressed.

CELESTIAL—Why does he cry that way?

MORTAL—Because he is suffering pain.

CELESTIAL—Oh, what a world this is! I would not like to be the God who made it! I wonder that He doesn't annihilate it.

MORTAL—You are too fast in your conclusions. Let me tell you something about man's body.

CELESTIAL—What is this?

MORTAL—This is a medical college. These young men are studying the body. They trace every nerve and explore every bone and muscle and vein and artery. Listen to me while I ask them a few questions.

MORTAL—Doctor, the body of man is a wonderful piece of work, is it not?

DOCTOR—Yes; very wonderful.

MORTAL—Have you gone thoroughly over this body?

DOCTOR—I have.

MORTAL—Then tell me, for the sake of this being from another world, have you discovered

in that body a single organ or mechanism or arrangement the end of which was to produce pain and make the owner of the body unhappy and miserable?

DOCTOR—No.

MORTAL—Have you ever heard of a doctor or surgeon who has?

DOCTOR—No; every organ and device in the body of man has for its end and purpose, pleasure and not pain, life and not death, satisfaction and not misery.

MORTAL—The body shows wonderful contrivance?

DOCTOR—Yes.

MORTAL—And that contrivance shows design?

DOCTOR—Yes.

MORTAL—But you tell me that the end of the contrivance was pleasure and not pain?

DOCTOR—Yes.

MORTAL—Then that must have been the purpose of the designer?

DOCTOR—Yes; it would seem so.

MORTAL—And if the body of man and of beast shows a good and beneficent design, then the God who made both man and beast must be a good God?

DOCTOR—That is common sense.

MORTAL—Now, sir, you see what I have

learned from this doctor. When God created the world, He either intended the misery of His creatures, or He intended their happiness, or He was indifferent about them. If He was indifferent, then all our pleasure comes by chance; but the nature of the contrivances says that that is not possible. If He intended to create creatures who should be miserable, He might have made them so that every sensation would be one of pain and misery; so that when I tasted an apple, instead of enjoying it, it would be bitter as wormwood; so that every sight of sea or mountain, instead of filling me with joy, would fill me with misery; so that every waking hour, every sleeping moment would be a long series of torments. But since He has not made me that way, but in the very opposite way, so that eating and drinking, in addition to keeping me alive, furnish me joy and pleasure, so that music and landscape and book, instead of torturing me, afford me delight, I do not see how I can escape the conclusion that I have been made by a God who is good, and whose tender mercy is over all His works.

CELESTIAL—But tell me more of pain.

MORTAL—I will gladly do that, especially since I can appeal to these doctors to verify what I say. When you consider that man is beset with danger, foes within and without, you will

see how pain is not to be thought of altogether as an enemy. Man's body is a sort of citadel, or camp, always besieged by some kind of enemy. Pain is the vidette, the sentinel, who stands on the lookout and warns of the approach of the foe. Pain sounds the alarm, and without pain (for we consider the world that is, not a world that might be imagined) it is hard to see how life could be preserved. There is a legend of a blacksmith who once burned his hand on a piece of iron he was welding. He swore a great oath and wished that he might forever lose the sense of pain, and his wish was granted.

CELESTIAL—What happened?

MORTAL—After a little, he picked up a hot iron, but suffered no pain. But in a moment, he looked at his hand, it was burned to the bone.

CELESTIAL—Then pain has its uses?

MORTAL—Yes. It has great uses. But let us look at more cases. Come with we into the ward of the hospital. Here is a nurse. I will ask her about these patients.

CELESTIAL—What is the matter with this man?

MORTAL—He has had his jaw broken in a fight. He and another man drank too much whisky, became intoxicated, and then began to fight with each other and with the police who came to arrest him. This is the result.

CELESTIAL—And this man, what is his trouble?

MORTAL—His leg has been amputated. He was stealing a ride on the railroad.

CELESTIAL—And this man?

MORTAL—He is suffering from a terrible disease which comes as one of the results of unclean and immoral living.

CELESTIAL—And this man?

MORTAL—He is a drug fiend. He commenced with tobacco and alcohol and now is a wreck.

CELESTIAL—And this little girl?

MORTAL—The poor child suffers from a disease which she inherited from a bad father or mother. There's another; the little boy who is blind; he was born that way.

CELESTIAL—Nearly every case you have told me about is a case with a moral history. The state of pain and misery in which the patient now is can be traced to wrong doing, either his own, or someone's else. I wonder what proportion of the cases that come into this hospital are like these?

MORTAL—I am not sure as to that; but I believe a very large percentage of them; at least, that is the what the doctors say.

MORTAL—You hear, sir, what this nurse tells us, how much of the pain in this hospital is due

to moral transgression? It would be a poor world if men could abuse their bodies and do wrong, and then never suffer. There is no telling how much pain has to do in making this world a tolerable world. It is a minister of justice that warns men not to do evil. If there were no evil in the world, there would be far less pain.

CELESTIAL—Yes, but listen to the cries of that little child! The nurse tells me that she overturned a lamp and was burned. It was an accident; no one sinned; no one can be blamed. And hear the groans of that man in a private room. He was a good man, lived a clean, honorable, abstemious life, and now he is in mortal agony through a stoppage in an organ, the uses of which no one has been able to discover. I understand what you say about pain that follows guilt, but what about these cases? If you were God, would you not relieve that child of its terrible pains?

MORTAL—Yes; I would. But I can only tell what I would do, not what God can do. So when you say to me, "If you were God," all you mean is, would *you* not relieve the child? It is impossible for either you or me to think of what we might do if we were in God's place. How can the finite tell what he would do if he were the infinite?

CELESTIAL—That man seems to be in great

agony. Before I came to earth this last time, the monarch of my world said to me, "If you should find there any deserving man in great pain, and innocently so, you are at liberty, and I give you herewith the power, to relieve him of his pains by changing him into an animal, provided, of course, he is willing to make the change." I think I shall make that man the offer. I cannot bear to hear his moans.

MORTAL—Very well. The nurse will take you in. You make him the offer and then come back and tell me what he said.

MORTAL—You saw him?

CELESTIAL—Yes.

MORTAL—Did you state your proposal?

CELESTIAL—Yes. I told him I grieved to see him suffer, and that if he were willing, I would change him into one of the lower animals and pain would leave him.

MORTAL—What said he?

CELESTIAL—He was very angry, and told me to go to some place, the name of which I did not catch; but I inferred from his look and accent that it was not a desirable place to live in.

MORTAL—You insulted him.

CELESTIAL—How?

MORTAL—By suggesting that he be changed into a beast. He would rather be a man and suffer, than a brute and never know pain. As

one of our philosophers has said, "It is better to be a dissatisfied man than a satisfied hog."

CELESTIAL—Then men prefer to be men even if they suffer?

MORTAL—Yes; and even in these cases of what we call "innocent suffering," although we make no foolish effort to say why it is so, we can see, unless utterly blinded by unbelief, that God overrules pain for good ends. For one thing, it is pain that occasions pity and touches the springs of compassion. These graces are the most beautiful things in life; they adorn the life of the king and the life of the peasant. They bless him who gives and him who takes. I do not say that pain ought to be kept in life, at least that portion of it that comes without moral transgression, but only that pain, as we see life, is the source of much that makes life beautiful and glorious. Heroism and patience are learned in its hard school. Mercy and compassion are angels that come only at its invocation. No other voice can call them. For pain there is no substitute of which we can think, pain of body or pain of soul. The tears, the sobs, the cries, the moans, are all used to purge and purify the soul. Some of the strongest and healthiest men with the least degree of pain, men like Nero, have been most damnable and most infamous impostors, while men who have suffered, like St.

Paul, with a thorn that God would not take out of his flesh, have been mankind's inspirers and leaders and teachers. Even where the life of the sufferer has been the most free from moral evil, still God has so made us that physical pain and mental suffering do raise the great question of good and evil, do make men think of the soul, of God, of eternal life. Out of the furnace of pain, men come forth as gold that has been tried with fire. All my struggles and tears and cries and pains can be turned to a spiritual use, that at the end I may find myself "smithied o'er with purest gold."

And methought that beauty and terror are only one, not two;
And all the world has room for love and death, and thunder and dew;
And all the sinews of hell slumber in summer air;
And the face of God is a rock, but the face of the rock is fair.
Beneficent streams of tears flow at the finger of pain;
And out of the cloud that smites, beneficent rivers of rain.

(We pass again into the streets)

CELESTIAL—Whose statue is yon? How sad and furrowed with care is his face? He looks to me as if he had been acquainted with what you call sorrow.

MORTAL—Yes; that is Abraham Lincoln.

CELESTIAL—Who was he?

MORTAL—He was born a poor lad in a Kentucky cabin, and his mother died when he was quite young. He worked in the fields and worked in the country stores, but at night he read books and learned about his country and the great men who lived in the past. He was a surveyor and then a lawyer; then he was sent to Congress. About that time there arose a great dispute in our country over the question of slavery. Black men had been brought here from Africa and had been made slaves, serving their white masters.

CELESTIAL—Are the blacks not men, too?

MORTAL—Yes; but the whites were stronger and wiser and made the blacks their slaves. The discussion waxed hotter and hotter, and it seemed that the nation would be rent in twain. During these debates, that man whose statue you see, spake so fearlessly and so wisely and so eloquently that the nation, that part of it that thought slavery was wrong, chose him as its leader. Then came four years of bitter civil war. There were times when it looked as if the nation would go to pieces and justice would not be vindicated. But that man never despaired of the Republic. He trod his wine press alone, but he strengthened the hand of the people in God. At length, after thousands upon thousands of lives had been lost, and tears had flowed down like

rivers, and every drop of blood drawn with the lash had been paid for with another drawn by the sword, and all the wealth piled by the bondsman had been sunk, victory came. The nation was saved and the iniquitous system of slavery disappeared forever. But just when the end had come and the long night of watching had turned into the dawn of rejoicing, the great leader and father of his people was shot by an assassin. That is Lincoln's history, so far as time is concerned. But every true American when he looks at a statue of Lincoln, knows that his life is still being lived, that his work is still being done, that his soul goes marching on.

CELESTIAL—Then that Civil War to which you refer was a struggle between right and wrong, between good and evil?

MORTAL—Yes; there were good men on both sides, and both sides thought they were right. But now it is possible for all to look back and see how that conflict was only one short chapter in the long struggle between good and evil.

CELESTIAL—What mean you by evil?

MORTAL—It is hard to define. But in our own lives and in the history of the world we see the effects of a force that produces misery instead of happiness, that brings darkness instead of light. It has filled the world with pain and sorrow and hate and bitter strife. You might

say that history is just one long story of the battle between the good and the evil. Its pages but record one long death grapple 'twixt the darkness and the light. Sometimes the evil appeared to be victorious and sometimes the good; but never is there peace between the two, either in the heart of man, or in the life of nations.

CELESTIAL—On which side is God?

MORTAL—On the side of right, of truth.

CELESTIAL—Then why is the right not victorious? Why does God not destroy the evil and put an end to the conflict? You say He is almighty. And still more do I wonder that He ever permitted evil to get into His world. How do you reconcile the fact of evil with the fact of a good God?

MORTAL—I do not reconcile it; no one ever has. I see that evil is in the world, but also that good is in the world, and in spite of the evil, I believe in God. I presume God might have had a world without evil. Who knows but there are thousands of such worlds? But it is plain from the history of our world, that here God wanted to produce moral character. So He created man and endued him with marvelous gifts, and the greatest of those gifts was the gift of freedom of will and of the knowledge of good and evil. You will agree that a world in which a single man who was free to choose evil yet chose the

good, is a far more wonderful world than one peopled with millions of beings who are good because they are made so. God is not the author of evil, but He is the author of man's nature. When man chooses the good, you have character; when man chooses the evil, you have sin. The fact of sin is an awful fact in human life. I grant it raises far more doubts about God than pain or suffering. But just as we should not know anything of sympathy and kindness and mercy were it not for pain and sorrow, so we should not know anything of courage, virtue, righteousness, the joy of overcoming, were it not for this fact of evil. It is the dark anvil upon which are hammered out the fine forms of character which adorn and beautify human existence, and, if there be another life, will constitute its chief glory. Oh, sir, I could tell of a great army of men and women who have overcome evil and have gotten the victory over temptation. In life they were our guides and teachers, in death their memory still keeps us company, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

CELESTIAL—I see what you mean. Pain and hardship and sorrow and evil are in the world and a part of human life, but in spite of them, or as I understand you, out of them and through them, comes the real strength and beauty of mortal existence. I think I can see how that is and

how all things may work together for good. But could God not have arrived at these ends, and brought man to the heights of which you speak by another path, one less bloody, steep, and dark?

MORTAL—One of our great poets of revolt, Byron, in his drama of the first murderer, Cain, asks that same question.

CELESTIAL—How does he put it?

MORTAL—Cain is talking about these matters with Lucifer, the fallen prince of heaven. He says:

> To produce destruction
> Can surely never be the task of joy;
> And yet my sire says He's omnipotent:
> Then why is evil—He being good? I ask'd
> This question of my father: and he said,
> Because this evil only was the path
> To good. Strange good that must arise from out
> It deadly opposite. I lately saw
> A lamb stung by a reptile: the poor suckling
> Lay foaming on the earth, beneath the vain
> And piteous bleating of its restless dam;
> My father pluck'd some herbs, and laid them to
> The wound; and by degrees the helpless wretch
> Resumed its careless life, and rose to drain
> The mother's milk, who o'er it tremulous
> Stood licking its reviving limbs with joy.
> Behold my Son! said Adam, how from evil
> Springs good!

LUCIFER—What didst thou answer?
CAIN— Nothing, for he

He is my father: But I thought that 'twere
A better portion for the animal
Never to have been stung at all, than to
Purchase renewal of its little life,
With agonies unutterable, though
Dispell'd by antidotes.

CELESTIAL—That is the very thought that was in my mind. How can you answer the objection raised by Cain, that it were better to have a world with no evil at all in it, than a world in which good springs out of evil?

MORTAL—I do not presume to say that God might have proceeded in some other way when He created the world and created man in His image, with the strange power to choose good or evil. God is the author of man, but He is not the author of man's evil choice, nor of the evil which man has chosen. Pain and sin were not His plan for the world. Sin has greatly hurt the world, but it has not been able to destroy the world. And even as the world today is, pain serves some good ends, and sin vanquished and forgiven clothes man with a new beauty and grandeur.

CELESTIAL—You speak, then, of the world as it is, not as man thinks he might have made it had he been God?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But taking the world as it is, does not its management seem altogether impersonal and heartless? It rushes on like a vast machine, treating all alike, the good and the evil, making no allowance for weakness or innocence. The ship sinks and men pray, but that does not stop the ship from going down. The earthquake throws cities into the dust and the pestilence sweeps over the land with indiscriminating fury. You told me, too, of your great leader of the people, who was shot by a wicked man just when he had saved the nation. It would appear that the world runs along by blind chance or grim law, and that wisdom and goodness have nothing to do with its management. If they do, why the ship sinking, why the earthquake, why the pestilence, why the assassination?

MORTAL—It is true that Lincoln was assassinated, and that God did not intervene. But he did not die until his work was done. Men look back and say how different it might have been if Lincoln had lived, how he would have healed the bitter wounds of the war and made the broken heart of the nation to rejoice. But his work was done. Had he lived to old age, he would never have been the figure in our history that he is today, his words repeated by every schoolboy, his face stamped on our coin and his

features looking down upon the thousands of every city. Nothing became him so much as his taking-off. Death lifted him out of the clouds and mists of factions and strifes and politics, and set him on high, where all might behold him. It made his name a touchstone of greatness, and his memory a national sacrament. As that proved true of what at the time seemed a fearful miscarriage of justice and cruel indifference on the part of God, so I believe it will prove true of every little child that died, when to us it seemed the child ought to have lived, of every experience of physical pain and mental distress, of every disappointment that seemed to leave no place for love in the economy of the world, of every wave of affliction that broke in anger over trembling souls, of every sad triumph of vice and failure of virtue, of every disaster by sea or by land that seemed to mock at man's faith in God, of every war that dug its deep trenches of misery and opened its fountains of blood. We are tempted to judge by feeble sense, and frame our creed by the vicissitudes of a moment of time in a world that is only a speck of dust amid His empire. We forget that we see only a little distance and that little distance but for a moment. Lo, these are a part of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? The thunder of His power, who can understand? But were it given

to me to see, no longer, as I must now see, through the glass darkly, but face to face, were it possible for me to behold not a part of His ways, but the whole portion, to hear not the faint echo of His voice and will reflected in this visible and transitory life, but the whole deep harmony of His thunder, I think I should see that this world is the best possible world for me, that

> Nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain.
> That good shall fall
> At last—far off—at last, to all,

and that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

IV

Common Sense and the Fall of Man

IN HIS book on *The Problems of Christianity,* Professor Royce calls the second of the three Christian ideas "the moral burden of the individual" and defines that idea in these words: "The individual human being is by nature subject to some overwhelming moral burden from which, if unaided, he cannot escape. Both because of what has technically been called original sin, and because of the sins that he himself has committed, the individual is doomed to a spiritual ruin from which only a divine intervention can save him." At this point in our discussion, we have nothing to say of a possible or actual divine intervention, for that will be the subject of the next chapter; but we face now that great and solemn teaching of Christianity that all men, by reason of their own actual transgressions and by reason of their common humanity, are in a state of sin and corruption. Although the word is not used in the Bible, this doctrine has always been popularly known as "The Fall of Man." In our argument thus far, we have traversed ground where there can be no division of Christian thought and sentiment. It

is plain that no one could be called a Christian who denied that man has knowledge, will, conscience, and a religious nature, nor would it be possible to think of a Christian as one who denied that God is and that He is good. But when we come to this fourth doctrine of Christianity, The Fall of Man, there is a tendency, even on the part of Christians, to evade it, ignore it, wish it were not true, or openly deny it. Certain hypotheses of science about the physical history of man have been eagerly seized upon by many as a welcome deliverance from what seems to be a humiliating and depressing belief. But, as I shall try to show, whatever may be established as to the physical history of man, there are tremendous moral facts in man's nature which must be faced. The doctrine of The Fall of Man is fundamental. Why? Because Christianity is a remedy for a fallen creature, one who needs help and cannot help himself. But if either one of these presuppositions is not true, if man does not need help, or, if needing help, he is able to help himself, then the meaning of Christianity is gone. The worth and importance of any given remedy depends upon whether I am sick, or if sick, am able to heal myself. If I do not need the remedy, or if I have one of my own that will do just as well, then the proposed remedy from another is of little worth to me.

Christianity assumes that man is fatally sick, that he cannot heal himself, and that if Christ does not heal him, he must forever perish. Christianity may be taught as a historic form of worship; it may be taught as a system of ethics; but New Testament Christianity declares itself to be a religion of redemption, and therefore assumes that man needs to be redeemed.

We are therefore, now come face to face with what Christianity has to say about the nature of man. If what it says is true, then none can ignore the question, "What shall I do with Christ?" If, on the other hand, it is false, then the whole religious problem may be dismissed. The present-day tendency is not so much to deny the Christian doctrine of man's present state, for there are facts that cannot be dismissed, much as we would like to do so, but to ignore it, and it may be said without exaggeration that many of the so-called problems of the modern Church now occasioning so much discussion and anxiety, have arisen out of a condition brought about, very largely, by the neglect of this fundamental truth. Not being reminded that we are sinful and fallen creatures, it is but natural that a generation should have arisen which does not feel itself to be in that condition. For this reason, much of the modern effort of Christianity has been mere building on the sand. The founda-

tion has been neglected, and if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? No doctrine of Christianity has been so ridiculed and mocked at as what it has to say about man's fall. Yet it is but natural that a man in the state Christianity describes him to be, should mock at the description of himself. It is the very thing we should expect from such a creature. If what Christianity has to say about man were everywhere received with enthusiasm by man, it would cast grave doubts upon that description; but when it is received with angry denial, with proud and adderlike puffings-up of human knowledge, with scoffings and laughter, we must think twice before we dismiss it as untrue. The fact is that Christianity is the only religion which has the courage to face the facts of life as they are, and this doctrine is an instance of that courage. If this subject to many cheerful minds will seem austere, remember it is "grave with the gravity of life, and stern only as the call of life, to any awakened mind, ought to be stern." The great hope which Christianity holds out for mankind is based upon the candor and honesty with which it faces the facts of man's life. This truth upon which I am now to dwell would indeed be a fearful truth, unless it were introductory to a brighter and more glorious truth. Only the Christian has any right to speak about the sinful

nature of man, his calamitous fall from favor with God, for he alone can tell of what God has done in the crisis thus brought about. It is not a ministration of death, but of life, that we declare—"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."

Our visitor has gone back to his celestial empire and there has made his report on why man believes in God, and why he continues to believe that God is good and just, in spite of the physical pain and the moral evil that are in the world. This again excites the interest of the inhabitants of his world, and particularly what he has told them about the presence of evil among the men who live on the earth. So he is sent back the third time to learn what he can about evil. I welcome him to my world once more, and we again enter upon an investigation. He reminds me that, in talking with him about the goodness of God, I spoke of the ceaseless conflict between good and evil, and what I said to him in answer to his question, "Why does God not stop the fight and give victory to the good?"

CELESTIAL—You were not able to say why God allowed this battle to go on from generation to generation, although you thought you could see how He overrules the conflict for good ends. But putting aside this question as to why God permits the struggle to go on, I would like

to know how it is that what you call evil appears with every new generation and thus supplies the hosts to battle for its cause? How does it come that you have this terrible thing you call evil always in the world? Why does it not die out and disappear?"

MORTAL—Evil is here, sir, because man is here. When man fades out and disappears, then I suppose evil will disappear, but not till then.

CELESTIAL—Evil, then, is in man, connected with man's life?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Is it connected with the life of what you call the beasts—horses, dogs, lions, birds?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—If all men were to be taken from the earth, but the birds and the beasts left, would there be evil in the world? Would this battle between right and wrong go on?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because evil can only be thought of in connection with what we explained to you on your last visit was a moral being. The beast has not a moral nature, therefore it cannot do wrong. Evil is inseparable from man; it must be discussed in the terms of man.

CELESTIAL—Then it is by man that evil entered the world to curse it?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But why does it keep coming into the world?

MORTAL—Because man is a fallen creature.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean by that?

MORTAL—I mean that he is fallen.

CELESTIAL—Fallen from what?

MORTAL—Fallen from the condition in which God made him and intended that he should live. He made man upright and left him free to choose whether he should continue in that condition.

CELESTIAL—And what did man choose?

MORTAL—Being left to the freedom of his will, man chose to do evil, and ever since, men have been making that same disastrous choice.

CELESTIAL—Then man as I now see him in your world is not as God made him?

MORTAL—By no means.

CELESTIAL—How does he differ? In face, or hands, or feet, or voice?

MORTAL—No; he differs in this: that he has chosen to sin, to disobey God, and out of that choice has come all the evil that repeats itself from generation to generation.

CELESTIAL—But what reason have you for thinking that this is true, that man is not as God made him, and that he is a fallen creature?

MORTAL—The first reason is that all races

and all religions have so thought of him. The fall has found an echo in every race and in every creed, Hebrew, Hindu, Egyptian, Indian, Grecian. They differ as to the way in which man came to fall, but all agree that man is not in the condition God meant him to be, and all look back to a day when man's life was different from what it now is.

CELESTIAL—Then you think that this world-wide and ancient tradition of a fall is a proof that man is fallen?

MORTAL—No; I did not say that. But it is certainly a very impressive fact that men have everywhere so thought of themselves.

CELESTIAL—But once before did you not tell me that men had held mistaken ideas about the heavenly bodies and their motions? If wrong in those notions about the universe, why not equally wrong in this notion about a fall?

MORTAL—Because there is a great difference between my idea about the stars and the planets, and my idea of myself. The one belongs to the material and visible, the other belongs to the unseen and immaterial. The belief of man about his own self is a far more serious thing than the guesses of man about the universe.

CELESTIAL—These different traditions of which you speak—Hebrew, Grecian, Egyptian, Hindu, Indian—did they arise independently, or

are they different versions of the same original history?

MORTAL—The loftiest of these traditions, and that which most answers to man's nature, is the story of the Hebrews. The others may be corrupted tales drawn from that, though in many instances it would be difficult to establish any relationship. But dependent or independent, there they are.

CELESTIAL—With what facts do they deal, these traditions?

MORTAL—With pain, temptation, sin, labor, sorrow, death.

CELESTIAL—They give an account of these?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But is it not possible that man, seeing himself surrounded by death and tormented with pain and compelled to labor, began to ask himself how these things came into the world and into his life, and thus invented the story?

MORTAL—With some of the stories that must be true. They are not all true as to the detail of their facts. But the main thing is just what you have pointed out, not the form of the story but the fact that man felt it necessary to tell some kind of a story, that he felt it necessary to account for death and pain and labor and temptation. That is the thing to hold in your mind.

The very fact that man has felt it necessary to try to give some account for labor and pain and death being in the world, is to me an evidence that man in his original state, man as God made him, was free from these things for which he now tries to give an account.

CELESTIAL—What you mean, then, by the evidence of these world-wide and ancient traditions of the fall of man is that they bear witness to the fact that man feels there is something wrong with him, something in him that ought not to be there?

MORTAL—Yes; to deny that would be to deny reason and common sense.

CELESTIAL—What other reason have you for believing that man has suffered a fall?

MORTAL—God.

CELESTIAL—How so?

MORTAL—I have already given you my reasons for believing in God, and why I am satisfied that God is a good and holy God. I take that as acknowledged by you. And just because I believe that God is good, I believe that man is fallen.

CELESTIAL—I cannot see how one follows the other. Because God is good, how does it follow that man is fallen?

MORTAL—For the reason that it is inconceivable that God's purpose and plan should be the

sinful creature that we see man to be. If man is just as God made him and intended him to be, then I am afraid I must cease to believe in God, for what sort of God would make a creature who would do by original nature the things that men do? That would be an awful God! But when I say that man has fallen from the condition in which God made him, I can still believe in God.

CELESTIAL—You mean that your conviction that man is fallen saves your faith in the goodness of God?

MORTAL—Yes; some people who have not reasoned the thing out, imagine they honor their faith in the goodness of God by giving up the belief that man is fallen; they think they save faith in God by abandoning belief in the fall of man. But the reverse is the truth which must rest on common sense; for if man is just as God made him, if this world, so full of death, so cursed with hate and lust and greed and pride and war and murder, is just what God meant it to be, then God would be just as bad as man is and as evil as the world is.

CELESTIAL—What other evidence have you which would show that man is not as he was first created ? You have mentioned the universal traditions of a fall and you have said truly that if man is as God made him, it does not say much for God. But in man himself, apart from past

beliefs and apart from his supposed faith in a good God, what is there to indicate a fall?

MORTAL—There is the evidence of man's conscience. Man was created to know the difference between good and evil, and yet men know not only the difference, but they know both good and evil by experience. Conscience is the reflection of a lost good, or a broken law. All over the world you will find traces of temples and altars which are monuments to conscience. Men felt there was alienation between them and the Perfect Law, that an offense had been committed for which an atonement must be made. That universal sense of guilt points to a universal catastrophe.

> He knows a baseness in his blood
> At such strange war with something good,
> He may not do the thing he would.

CELESTIAL—But do you not mean by this that as each man does evil, he suffers in conscience, and his conscience thus reflects a fall, but only the fall of that particular man and in that particular offense?

MORTAL—I mean that, but I mean much more than that. It is true that each man coming to a knowledge of good and evil, and choosing the evil, falls. But the thing to account for is the fact that he *does* choose the evil. His particu-

lar fall points to a general fall and his special sin is the issue of a general corruption.

CELESTIAL—I seem to recognize this building. Were we not here before?

MORTAL—Yes! this is the Court of Common Pleas where you saw the murderer sentenced to death. Here are prisoners waiting for their trial to be called.

CELESTIAL—All these men have committed offenses?

MORTAL—Yes; either they or someone else. The crimes at least have been committed. These men are supposed to have had a part in it.

CELESTIAL—What offense is that man charged with?

MORTAL—Arson.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—Setting fire to another man's house or barn or store.

CELESTIAL—He tried to burn down his neighbor's house?

MORTAL—Yes. In the night. The house was destroyed and the family barely escaped with their lives.

CELESTIAL—Terrible! That woman, what is she charged with?

MORTAL—Murder. She put poison in a cup of coffee that her husband drank.

CELESTIAL—And that man?

MORTAL—Mayhem.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—He cut and maimed a man whom he hated; now the man will be lame for the rest of his life.

CELESTIAL—And that man?

MORTAL—Cruelty to animals. He went into his enemy's barn one night and hamstrung his horses.

CELESTIAL—And that man?

MORTAL—Kidnapping. He stole a little boy five years old out of the home of a rich man and woman.

CELESTIAL—And that man?

MORTAL—Cruelty to his children. On Christmas Eve, he put rocks in the stocking which his little girl had hung up, hoping she would find a present there in the morning. When she found the rocks and began to cry, the father took the stocking and swinging it over his head, struck the little girl with the stones. The doctors say she will live, but that she will be marred for the rest of her days.

CELESTIAL—And that man?

MORTAL—Slander. He lied about his neighbor and tried to ruin his reputation for truth and honor.

CELESTIAL—Are there many such courts?

MORTAL—Yes; all over the earth.

CELESTIAL—And cases like these are being tried in them?

MORTAL—Yes; every day, thousands upon thousands.

CELESTIAL—Why, you must be a race of monsters!

MORTAL—No; we are not monsters; we are just sinners, fallen men and women.

CELESTIAL—But do all mortals commit crimes like these people?

MORTAL—No; probably a very small percentage of them.

CELESTIAL—Then I am safe in remaining longer in your world?

MORTAL—Altogether so.

CELESTIAL—Then these criminals are exceptions?

MORTAL—Yes; they are exceptions. I have seen very few murderers, thieves, adulterers, slanderers. But I know that these people we have seen are men just as I am a man. They inherit the same nature that I inherit and have the same inclinations and desires, otherwise we would have no right to judge them.

CELESTIAL—You frighten me!

MORTAL—All these acts for which these people are to be tried grew out of desires that are common to all men. There was dislike and hate in the heart before there was murder with the

hand. There was coveting in the heart before there was theft in the hand. There was lust in the heart before there was the deed of shame.

CELESTIAL—These persons then have only yielded to impulses which sleep in the hearts of all men?

MORTAL—That is all.

CELESTIAL—Why then do you punish them so? Why are they sent to the penitentiary and to the scaffold instead of you, for if what you say is true, you, too, have a thieving, murderous nature?

MORTAL—Because society must protect itself from crime and must avenge wrongdoing. But men can only judge of what man says with his lips or does with his hands. It has no vision of what goes on in a man's heart. But God sees the heart. So although all are not criminals before the law of man, before the law of God we are all offenders."

CELESTIAL—But you do not mean to tell me that you ever wished your neighbor's house burned down or that you wished a man were killed?

MORTAL—I hope not.

CELESTIAL—And you say that before God all are the same?

MORTAL—Yes; I mean that the nature that in other men has issued in these crimes is in me.

Common sense tells me that that is so. I would have to deny that I was a man to hold that this is not so.

(We pass to the street)

CELESTIAL—Why does that man in the wagon talk so loudly with the man in the other wagon? And he seems to be using the name of your God. Is he worshipping God?

MORTAL—No; he is swearing.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—When men get angry with one another, or with themselves, they swear, and in swearing they use the name of God. But it is not the same way in which they use it in the church.

CELESTIAL—Then there are two ways of using the name of God?

MORTAL—Yes; out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. That man is one of those you saw praying in the church on your first visit.

CELESTIAL—He was not in earnest then?

MORTAL—Yes; he was sincere in his prayer to God. But now he has yielded to what we call our lower nature and takes God's name in vain. He uses that which stands for the highest and holiest, the name of God, to express now all the blackness and hatred of his heart.

CELESTIAL—But how do you account for that strange inconsistency and contrariety in the same man?

MORTAL—I can account for it only on the ground that man is a fallen creature. He turns his knowledge of the highest to the use of the lowest. Men have written great volumes on this subject of the fall of man, but for a proof of it, all they need to do is to listen to a man swear. That shows, as nothing else, the terrible dislocation that man has undergone and how he has turned the truth of God into a lie.

CELESTIAL—Is that man sick? Why does he lie in the gutter that way? Has he been hurt like the man we saw taken to the hospital?

MORTAL—No; the man is drunk. He has been drinking liquor till it has gone to his head. Now he has no control of his movements. He lies there like a log.

CELESTIAL—But did he not know that this would be the result?

MORTAL—He knew it well. It is not the first time he has been in that condition. Now has a terrible appetite for whisky, which rules him like a tyrant.

CELESTIAL—Then it was not for the sake of supporting the body that he drank this liquor?

MORTAL—No; it was for the sake of drinking.

CELESTIAL—Do any of the animals do that?

MORTAL—I never saw one that did. Man is the only drunkard.

CELESTIAL—Then man, who is made in the image of God, and has the right to rule over the beasts, nevertheless sinks at times to a level below that of the lowest brute?

MORTAL—That is his sad condition. He knows that he is miserable; but the very fact that he knows himself to be miserable tells him that he was not made to be miserable. He knows that, had he never been more than a corrupted being, he would have had no idea of truth and beauty and good, and yet if he had never been corrupted, he would enjoy in his innocence both truth and beauty and good. But now his life is a strange mixture, an awful discord, a battlefield where opposing desires and appetites fight fiercely for the possession of his soul, a constant collision between two different laws, till man hardly knows how to classify himself, or in what rank to put himself; all that he knows is, he is out of his true place and has not been able to find it again. As one of our great souls has said:

> What a chimera, then, is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! A judge of all things, feeble worm of the earth, depositary of the truth, cloaca of uncertainty and error, the glory and the shame of the universe!

CELESTIAL—What procession is that passing up the street?

MORTAL—Those men are members of a popular people's party. They advocate the rights of the common people and desire that restrictions and limitations should be set about men who are raised to political office or who either fall heir to, or amass, great wealth.

CELESTIAL—Upon what is their argument based?

MORTAL—In reality upon the doctrine of the fall of man and the corruption of his whole nature. They would be surprised if you told them that; nevertheless, that is the truth. They recognize that the nature of man is such he must not have liberty to do as he pleases, for his individualism leads to injustice toward his fellow man. If he is in office, restraints must be set upon his powers; if rich, he must be heavily taxed, for he will do harm with his wealth and the power it brings him.

CELESTIAL—Then the whole social and democratic movement stands upon the platform that man is a fallen creature?

MORTAL—It does.

CELESTIAL—What building is this?

MORTAL—This is a public school, and yonder a university, and over there a religious school.

CELESTIAL—What do they there?

MORTAL—The youth are taught the principles of character and of knowledge.

CELESTIAL—But if that is so, it cannot be true that your youth, left to themselves, grow up to be intelligent and useful citizens?

MORTAL—No; if left to themselves, they would degenerate into savages, and would make life intolerable for all. It is only in a theoretical sense that men talk about a natural and upward development. Our whole system of education and our whole society, for that matter, proceed on the directly opposite belief; namely, that men and nations tend to go downward and not upward. The purpose of our education and our moral instruction is to arrest that natural decay.

CELESTIAL—Do they succeed?

MORTAL—In a sense they do. That is, they call into play those worthy forces in man's life which have survived the corruption of sin. But they do not guarantee freedom from the effects of evil, for, as we saw, some of the worst of men have been among the best educated and the most highly gifted. As a clever writer has said: "It is possible for a man to pass from the ape, and yet go to the devil." It may be that there has been a physical development; but however that may be there is no doubt about the fact that

there is a force of moral deterioration always at work in man.

CELESTIAL—What are those ruins and columns and towers in that picture on the wall?

MORTAL—These are the ruins of Nineveh, those of Egypt, those of Greece, and those of Rome. They were great kingdoms and empires in their days. They wrote great books and sang great songs and built up a great learning. They had orators, soldiers, poets, philosophers, scientists. We boast of our twentieth-century civilization and our inventions, but there were things done by those ancient empires which we cannot do, nor can even imagine how they did them. Yet these empires are all gone. They are but names. These ruins that you see are all that is left of them.

CELESTIAL—Then all the great civilizations and kingdoms that man has built up, man has destroyed?

MORTAL—Yes; the work of destruction has kept pace with the work of construction. The brightest civilizations have in time been hurled back into barbarism.

CELESTIAL—Will that happen to your civilization, and to the great kingdoms now flourishing on your earth?

MORTAL—If the history of the future be the history of the past, that is what will happen.

There is the moral of all human tales;
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past:
First freedom, and then glory—when that fails,
Wealth, corruption, barbarism at last.
And History, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but one page.

CELESTIAL—But how do you account for this immemorial record of destruction, this constant return to barbarism?

MORTAL—I can account for it only on the ground that man's nature is corrupted and that corruption must always show itself by corrupting and by poisoning.

CELESTIAL—Then you have no hope that gradually an ideal and perfect kingdom will be established on the earth?

MORTAL—I believe that what we call the Kingdom of God will one day be established; but I do not believe that the forces of good and truth that are in the world will of themselves and through any long process of growth produce such a kingdom, for always, so long as man's nature is what it is, the forces of evil and destruction we have just been speaking of will be counteracting the forces of good.

CELESTIAL—Have you any authority other than your own for such a sweeping statement as that? What do your great scientists say?

MORTAL—One of the greatest of them died

the other day—Fabre. He had studied the life of insects till he knew more than any other man about that insect world. He wrote a book on social life among the insects, and in that book he casts the horoscope of mankind in these words:

> The abolition of slavery and the education of woman: these are two enormous strides upon the path of moral progress. Our descendants will go further. They will see with a lucidity capable of piercing every obstacle, that war is the most hopeless of all absurdities; that our conquerors, victors of battles and destroyers of nations, are detestable scourges; that a clasp of the hand is preferable to a rifle shot; that the happiest people is not that which possesses the largest battalions, but that which labors in peace and produces abundantly; and that the amenities of existence do not necessitate the existence of frontiers, beyond which we meet with all the annoyances of the customhouse, with its officials who search our pockets and rifle our luggage. Our descendants will see this and many other marvels which today are extravagant dreams. To what an ideal height will the process of evolution lead mankind? To no very magnificent height, it is to be feared. We are afflicted by an indelible taint, a kind of original sin, if we may call sins a state of things with which our will has nothing to do. We are made after a certain pattern and we can do nothing to change ourselves. We are marked with the mark of the beast, the taint of the belly, the inexhaustible source of bestiality.

CELESTIAL—But what is this in the carriage?

MORTAL—That is a baby, a very young man. It would be a poor world if there were no babies in it. They seem like messengers from God Himself, and when we want a figure for innocence and guilelessness, we take the little baby lying in its mother's arms, looking out so dreamily, so trustingly, on the great world and all that is in it. It dreads no one and loves everybody.

CELESTIAL—Then the little infants, these little children, like this baby in the carriage, are free from this terrible disease which you have been describing, and which is to be found in all grown persons? When you say that man is a fallen creature, you except these innocent babies?

MORTAL—It is natural for you to think so, and I could wish that it were so, just as I wish I could except all grown persons. But we must take life as we see it. Every one of these charming babies shares in the corruption that has befallen man.

CELESTIAL—You cannot think that! How can you be so heartless? Upon what do you base your proof of such a belief?

MORTAL—Because my common sense tells me that the boy is father to the man, and when I see the sweetest and most attractive babe, I behold dormant there all the possibilities for good and for evil that are manifest in the works of man.

I have pointed out to you some of the evils that are enacted in the world today, the bloody wars, the fiendish crimes, the cruel persecutions, the nameless cruelties. It shocked you into exclaiming that we are a race of monsters. But is it not plain to you, sir, that a few years ago the generation that have done all this iniquity were every one babes lying in their mothers' arms, as innocent looking as this babe which has made you ask me these questions? If this generation of infants were to grow up as sinless beings, and establish a sinless society, then we might conclude that a generation of infants had been born without the effects of the fall in their nature. But, sir, if you and I were permitted to come back to earth fifty years from to-night, we should find the earth stained with the same old crimes, the same evils, the same abominations, the same atrocities, and every one of them committed by those who now lie and smile and dream as if they were the symbols of purity and innocence.

CELESTIAL—Then the curse of the fall extends to the smallest child, to the oldest man?

MORTAL—Yes; it reaches from the cradle to the grave.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean by the grave.

MORTAL—Come with me to the cemetery and I will show you.

CELESTIAL—What is that man doing?

MORTAL—He is the minister. He is reading the service for burial. Hear him—"Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust."

CELESTIAL—What does that mean?

MORTAL—It means that the man is dead. They are giving his body back to the earth.

CELESTIAL—Who is, or was, the dead man?

MORTAL—He is the murderer, whom, upon your first visit to earth, you saw sentenced to death for his crimes.

CELESTIAL—Are all these graves that I see the graves of bad men like that? Was their life taken by the state, by justice?

MORTAL—No, alas, no! The good and the bad, the murderer and his victim all lie here together. The small and the great are there, princes, kings, counselors, infants that never saw the light. There the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

CELESTIAL—I see those words you have been saying. "At rest," on all these stones. What does it mean?

MORTAL—It means that mankind recognizes that life as it now is, with all its glory and grandeur, is a struggle, a conflict, and that all, even those who have played their part the most poorly,

need the rest of the grave. We do not follow their spirits; that we cannot do. But we mean that for these dead, the labor and the struggle of earthly life is over.

CELESTIAL—Who is being buried yonder? A great concourse of people is gathered about his grave, and they all seem to be deeply touched with sorrow.

MORTAL—He was a good man, a minister. He fed his flock like a shepherd. He warned the careless and comforted the mourner and visited the widows and the orphans in their affliction, and kept himself unspotted from the world.

CELESTIAL—And he had to die, just like the murderer?

MORTAL—Yes.

> Now is the stately column broke,
> The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
> The trumpet's silver sound is still,
> The warder silent on the hill!

He has gone, but his works do follow him.

CELESTIAL—And that little grave yonder?

MORTAL—That is the grave of an infant, a little babe that did not live to see the light of day, but long enough to wake a thousand hopes and fears and to ask a thousand questions.

> O fairest flower! No sooner blown but blasted,
> Soft silken primrose fading timelessly.

It would make one weep till pity's self be dead.

CELESTIAL—The old minister, the vile murderer, the young mother, the newborn babe, the strong man, the young lad, all have died?

MORTAL—Yes; all have died.

CELESTIAL—Will you die?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—And all who live must die, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Why must all die?

MORTAL—Because man is fallen. All must die for all have sinned. Death reigns a king from Adam to the youngest, the child that did but yesterday suspire.

CELESTIAL—Then death is not the natural course for man?

MORTAL—No; it is natural to his fallen condition, but not to the condition in which he was first made.

CELESTIAL—But all the beasts die, do they not? If death is natural for them, why not for man?

MORTAL—Because man is not a beast. On your first visit, you saw the difference between man and the beast. Because the beast dies naturally is no reason why man should die. The beast has never asked questions about his death; man has. Ever since death first came into life of man, men have realized that death was some-

thing unnatural and abnormal. If it were the natural thing, the original plan for man to die, how could you account for the timeless protest that man has made against death, for his numberless explanations of how death got into the world. He thinks he was not made to die; yet finds that he must die. Men say soft things about death and write musical sentences about its great release. But the fact is that the common universal consciousness of mankind has ever revolted at the thought of death, and has recognized it as an intruder. Humanity recoils from death.

> Death is a fearful thing—
> To die and go, we know not where;
> To lie on cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod; 'tis too horrible!
> The weariest and most loathed worldly life
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature, is a paradise
> To what we fear of death.

CELESTIAL—Then how do you account for death?

MORTAL—I have already told you. It is a witness to man's fall, a penalty that all who live inherit.

CELESTIAL—Your belief in the fall is then the explanation of those two dark facts, the fact of evil and the fact of death?

MORTAL—Yes; some have tried to explain evil and death by explaining them away, by trying to make them mean something other than they really are. But they are grim facts that will not be explained away. Evil is evil; sin is sin; death is death. They will never be anything else. The fall of man is the only explanation of these mysteries; it saves the honor of God, and yet holds out a hope for man. It is the lost key that fits the rusty lock of human life. There are those who say that man's nature is good, that only his institutions and education and surroundings are at fault. That was the theory of Rousseau and his school. But if man is altogether good as to his nature, how came it that the education and the institutions are bad, for man was their maker? And others tell us that man could never have fallen, for we can trace the growth and development of his body from lowest saurian to godlike man. But even if this were true, your godlike man, your highest product of development, evinces vices and passions that destroy him and his society, and as soon as the child comes to years of discretion, he manifests a corrupt nature which immediately starts him on a downward course. That is no theory or hypothesis, but a fact confirmed by common sense. Man is born a wild ass' colt. He does evil from the womb. And still others admit the deplorable state of

man, but say it was always so, and must ever be so, and existence must ever be a curse. But the doctrine of the fall declares that man was not always thus, nor made thus by God; that God made him upright, but that man has sought out devices; that man chose to sin, and that sin has corrupted his whole nature and made him subject to misery and death itself, but that in the midst of this ruin, there are yet to be traced, in broken columns and fallen walls, and choked-up fountains, the glory and grandeur of the original structure; that underneath this mass of rubbish still glows the divine fire; that the nature of man, although everywhere corrupted, has not been destroyed, and that although wandered into a far country, wasted by the disease and pinched by the hunger of sin, man is still able to think of his original state, of God's true design for him, of that Father's home from which he has wandered, and the peace and innocence from which he has fallen.

V

Common Sense and the Incarnation

PASSING one day the door of a church in whose creed the doctrine of the Incarnation has no place, I paused to read a brief statement of faith which had been posted on a bulletin board in front the church. It mentioned the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, and said that these two together made a creed that was easy to understand. From that statement, one would be justified in making two inferences: first, that the creeds of most churches were hard to understand; and second, that a creed which is easy to understand is to be preferred to one that is hard to understand. But that depends altogether upon what you have left after you understand the creed. The author of those sentences evidently meant that the being of a God and the consciousness of the solidarity of the human race were articles of faith which would suggest little difficulty to the ordinary mind, whereas the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the work of the Holy Spirit, were articles of faith which a man might pretend to believe but could never understand, and therefore useless. I am not sure that

even a creed with just those two articles, God and man, would be so easily understood as might be inferred from the sentence I have quoted, for, What is God? and, What is man? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection, when even the mystery of human life evades you and baffles you? But were it so that both man and God are easily understood, still I am not sure that that would be any reason for superiority in a religious system which taught just those two truths. The Christian religion does indeed ask me to believe in things that are too high for me, and of these is the Incarnation. But if that doctrine, with all its admitted obscurity and mystery, addresses itself to a condition in which man finds himself, and puts forward an account of the plan by which man is to be delivered out of that condition, then I think that whatever mystery there may be in the doctrine, a religion with it for an article of faith is infinitely to be preferred to another which has no article of faith which puzzles me or perplexes me, and yet ignores altogether the dilemma in which I find myself. The Incarnation, then, is a doctrine of a religion which deals with man as a sinner.

Christianity is something more than a soliloquy of a great and good mind, or a number of such minds, upon life and God. It is a great remedy, not a theory of medicine and health.

It is an offer and an appeal, and not a philosophy. It is more than a collection of wise proverbs and inspired Psalms, and eloquent prophecies, and a recital of the deeds of fearless and self-sacrificing lives; it is the account of a great transaction by God in behalf of man.

We leave now the broad and general territory over which we have been traveling, and enter upon a territory which is definitely Christian. We have indeed spoken of the Christian doctrine of man's nature, of God and His Infinite Being, of man's present calamitous and corrupted estate; but all these we might conceive of as being held by those who are not Christians. But now we are face to face with a doctrine that is definitely Christian, for it reveals Christianity in action, Christianity as a working force; it displays God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. It may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of "Common Sense and The Incarnation," for great and profound is its mystery. But upon examination it will be found that common sense will approve both the condition of man presupposed by the Incarnation, and the manner and the effects of the Incarnation.

Our visitor upon his return to his celestial kingdom, hastens to make his report on the condition of man. He relates how man is fallen, and tells something to his amazed countrymen

of the sad and terrible evidences of that fall—arresting conscience, ever-burning remorse, destructive forces in man ever tearing down what constructive forces have built up, till the earth is strewed with ruins of dead civilizations, and yet, everywhere is the scene of new efforts and new enterprises; how man shows himself to be the lord of creation, and yet with an ability to sink beneath the level of the beast he has tamed; how the music of his life is discord; how he displays a mysterious contrariety of thought and action; how he knows that he is miserable, and yet for that very reason believes that he was not ever thus, nor made to be so; how he is at once the judge of all things and yet a worm of the earth, the glory and yet the shame of the universe.

O man, strange composite of heaven and earth!
Majesty dwarfed to baseness! Fragrant flower
Running to poisonous seed! And seeming worth
Cloaking corruption! Weakness, mastering power!
Who never art so near to crime and shame
As when thou hast achieved some deed of name!

The report which he gives stirs yet keener curiosity on the part of these angelic beings to look further into the condition of mankind. They wonder what will be the future of man, his nature corrupted, yet his being not destroyed. Is there any hope for him? Has any remedy

been devised? Or is he doomed to struggle forever under the curse of the fall, ever assailed by toil, sorrow, sin, and death? To satisfy themselves on this point, their ambassador is again sent back to earth.

(We walk through the streets on a winter evening. The shop windows are ablaze with light, and throngs of men and women and children pass in and out, or hurry along the streets, their arms filled with packages and bundles, and all seem merry and joyful.)

CELESTIAL—What means all this bustle and why are all these people so happy and merry? I saw nothing like this on my previous visits to your world.

MORTAL—This is Christmas Eve.

CELESTIAL—What is Christmas?

MORTAL—It is the day on which Christ our Saviour was born.

CELESTIAL—Who was He?

MORTAL—Come with me tomorrow morning and I will tell you about Him.

(Christmas Day we enter a church)

CELESTIAL—This is a church we have entered?

MORTAL—Yes; they are having a Christmas service.

CELESTIAL—Why all these green vines and red and white flowers?

MORTAL—That is to express the feeling of gladness that is in the people.

CELESTIAL—And that star, like the worlds through which I came on my way to earth?

MORTAL—That is to represent the Star of Bethlehem, where Christ was born.

CELESTIAL—What is that they are singing?

MORTAL—It is a Christmas hymn. Listen!

Joy to the world! The Lord is come,
Let earth receive its King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

CELESTIAL—What curse is that of which they sing?

MORTAL—The curse of sin, the curse of the fall. We saw when you were here last that it extends everywhere; that all men, the best and the worst, are tainted with evil; that evil has poisoned and corrupted all the works of man's hands; that death, the penalty of sin, rules over all men from the newborn babe to the tottering nonagenarian.

CELESTIAL—And this Christ, whose birth they celebrate, came to deliver man from the effects of that universal curse?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Where did he come from?

MORTAL—From God.

CELESTIAL—And where does God live?

MORTAL—God is everywhere. Human beings, spirits living in a body, must have a fixed abode. You live in your world, and I live in my world; but God is everywhere. The heavens of heavens cannot contain Him; yet He is near to us now.

> Closer is He than breathing,
> Nearer than hands and feet.

CELESTIAL—Then Christ is a spirit like your God?

MORTAL—He is more than that. He is God.

CELESTIAL—Then there are more Gods than one?

MORTAL—No; God is one. He is Three in One. God is Father, God is Son, God is Holy Spirit.

CELESTIAL—And all these Three are Persons?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—How many Persons are there in you?

MORTAL—One only; that is the only sort of person that I know.

CELESTIAL—How then can you understand that three persons make just one God?

MORTAL—I did not say I understood how. I never saw anyone who did. But it would be foolish for me to say that it could not be so because it is not so with me. I cannot judge of God by man. It is evidently something that is beyond the comprehension of my mind, and yet my mind, my common sense, tells me not to conclude that therefore it cannot be true.

CELESTIAL—There are things, then, which exist, which are true, and yet which you do not understand?

MORTAL—Yes; I am not so wise as some men who make what they can understand the limit of what is true and possible. I have seen only a part of the ways of God, a very little portion. The mistake men make when they think about the Incarnation of God and the Three Persons in His Being is to try to put themselves in the place of God and say what is possible and not possible. Fifty years ago, if one of our species had said that London would throw messages through the air and over the sea to Washington, our capital, men would have said it was utterly impossible. Now it is done every week. If, then, man is able to do things which were once beyond the comprehension of other men, and still beyond the comprehension of most men, it seems to me that we ought to be very careful in saying that anything is impossible with

God because we do not understand it. To say that with authority, we should have to know God to perfection.

CELESTIAL—How did this Christ come to your world? I hear them sing of Bethlehem and the manger and the Virgin Mary?

MORTAL—He was born of a virgin, named Mary, the betrothed of Joseph.

CELESTIAL—He came into the world, then, just like that babe we saw in the park on my last visit to earth?

MORTAL—Yes; except that the woman's husband was not His father.

CELESTIAL—Who was His father?

MORTAL—He had no earthly father. God is His Father.

CELESTIAL—But if He wanted to come as a little child into the world, why did He not come through an earthly father as well as an earthly mother? What would be the difference?

MORTAL—This very important difference: He was to come as a man and yet tell men that He was come from God, and that He was the Son of God. In other words, it had to be clear to them that He existed before He was born, that His life, unlike my life, and all other mortals, did not begin at His birth. But if He had had an earthly father as well as an earthly mother, it would have been hard for me to be-

lieve that He came from God. His being born of the Virgin was enough to make it plain that He came in the likeness of flesh, and yet at the same time it made it plain that He was more than a man and had existed before He was born.

CELESTIAL—I understand you to mean, then, that by the Incarnation, God became man. But when you defined to me, upon my second visit, your belief in God, you said He was a Spirit, eternal and unchangeable. But how can He be unchangeable, if, as you now tell me, existing from all eternity, He took the form of man? Would that not be a limitation, and thus a change in His being?

MORTAL—If the Incarnation were a change in His Being, it would be a limitation of His Being, and therefore God would not be God. But what we mean is that God showed Himself in this way. He has showed Himself in many ways. The whole creation is, in a sense, the Incarnation of God, and in that creation, man, made in the image of God is the highest expression of the life of God, for in Him we live and move and have our being. When God, therefore, chose to speak to men through a man, and entered man's nature, it was no more a change or a limitation, and thus unworthy of God, than was the creation of the world. We only know

that the Infinite God was pleased, first to create the finite, and then to deal with it in love and in wisdom.

CELESTIAL—And this whole marvelous transaction, God revealing Himself in man, was brought about by the fall of man, and the miserable and helpless condition into which that fall led him?

MORTAL—It was.

CELESTIAL—But suppose that man had not fallen; suppose he had continued to choose the good and had never disobeyed his God and suffered the terrible dislocation that we now see? What then? Would there still have been an Incarnation?

MORTAL—You are like many questioners, sir, who want to deal with the imaginary, or the possible, instead of with the actual. It is not inconceivable that man, who, although created innocent, was not yet perfect, even had he not sinned might have had some fuller demonstration of his relationship to God, and that demonstration might have taken the form of an incarnation. That would indeed have been an incarnation, but how different from the Incarnation as we know it. There would be all the difference between God taking the form of a sinless and unfallen being and taking the form of one who was corrupted and degraded with

every imaginable vice and sin. All we can say is that as a historic fact, the Incarnation took the latter form and that it was for our good, and brought about by our sin and corruption, and that God was manifested to take away our sins. We must look at the Incarnation as sinners. We can take no other view. You, indeed, might, but we mortals must judge of the Incarnation in the light, or in the darkness, of human transgression and sin.

CELESTIAL—But I wonder why God did not deal in some other way, even with fallen man. If, as you say, man had a fair probation, and need not have fallen, but deliberately chose to do evil, and as a result the whole nature of man, though not ruined, is nevertheless poisoned with sin, why did not God annihilate the race and start anew?

MORTAL—It certainly was not our merit that brought about the Incarnation. God could have swept away our species with the besom of His righteous indignation. But that He was long-suffering and chose another method only serves to clothe Him in our eyes with a more exquisite tenderness. Then, if we may compare what He does in nature with what He does in redemption, God's plan is never to go back, but, out of the present condition, to evolve and produce what He has in mind.

CELESTIAL—But He is almighty. Why could He not have compelled man to obey His will, and thus have obviated the necessity of this long and painful and humiliating process of an Incarnation?

MORTAL—Because God Himself cannot make a man good by compulsion. I am good only when I choose to do good. And for the same reason, even when He has offered His plan of redemption to the world, He compels no man to accept it. A world with one solitary being in it who chose to do God's will would be a more important world than one peopled by millions who were good because never tempted to disobey or do evil. God did plan to redeem man, but the redemption had to be suited to the needs and the condition of man.

CELESTIAL—But why that particular manner of Incarnation—born of a woman, passing through the years of childhood?

MORTAL—As I have pointed out already, it is not necessary that we should always be able to give a reason for the way God has chosen. His ways may well be not our ways. But the Incarnation as a mode of God coming to man commends itself to our common judgment. Moreover, it met the longing and expectation of mankind. They yearned for a visible demonstration of God. In many races and religions,

there was rumors that God had once come; or songs and prophecies that He would come, that a virgin would conceive and bear a Son, and call His name Immanuel, God with us. It seems to me that in coming as He did come, God met and answered the earnest expectation of the creature.

CELESTIAL—But what if He had come in some other way or form?

MORTAL—God has many ways. But do you think the story of that coming could have awakened a more responsive chord in the breast of alienated man, or that any divine transaction could have so touched the heart of mankind with its beauty and simplicity, and yet with its solemn awe and majesty, as the birth in the manger-cradle at Bethlehem? We mortals like to speak about the sympathy and the compassion of Jesus; how He was tempted like as we are, has traveled our steep and stony path, has tasted our bitter cups of adversity; how He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and that every sigh we utter is echoed in the Eternal Breast; and that great and precious thought of our Saviour rests for its reality, not upon the words of comfort that He spake, nor on the works of healing that He wrought, but upon the fact, the initial fact, that He was born of woman and lay in the arms of His mother, thus at the very be-

ginning identifying Himself with that humanity He came to redeem.

> The soul's the way. Not even Christ Himself
> Can save man else than as He holds the soul;
> And therefore, did He come into our flesh,
> As some wise hunter creeping on his knees,
> With a torch, into the blackness of the cave,
> To face and quell the beast there—take the soul,
> And so possess the whole man, body and soul.

CELESTIAL—But granted that all that is so, that the way of your Incarnation was the best way, what reason have you to believe that this Man, Jesus, who had a body like other men, thirsted and hungered as other men, died as other men, was the Mighty God Incarnate? You may be deceived about Jesus Christ as you have been mistaken about so many things in your world.

MORTAL—That is a most natural and sensible question. There ought to be very exceptional reasons for believing such a very unusual thing of a man who has appeared in the world's history. We commence with what He Himself said. He never spoke about His birth as if He began then, but frequently alluded to His existence before He was born. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." In other words, in distinction with men, He has existed from all eternity. He often said He came from His Father,

and, just before He died, referred to the glory which He had with God before the foundation of the world.

CELESTIAL—But you do not believe that He was divine, God in the flesh, merely because He said so?

MORTAL—What you mean by that question, I take it, is this: You do not believe a man is divine because he says so? No; I certainly do not. But because Jesus says so, I do. In other words, the person and life of Jesus confirms His testimony about Himself. His works, His life, corroborate what He said about His Person. The transcendent greatness of His spiritual nature makes us believe He must be true when He calls Himself the Son of God. The very doctrine of the Incarnation is itself a witness to the life that produced the doctrine. One is as great and pure as the other. He spoke truly because He was truth. The challenge which He flung out when in our flesh still holds good, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He has a name that is above every name. To mention Him in a list commencing with Moses and Plato and ending with Luther and Lincoln is not so much an offense against common orthodoxy as against common decency. He stands in lonely spiritual supremacy and needs no adjective of "great." Shakespeare said of Julius Cæsar, one

who lived in Rome a little before Jesus was born in Bethlehem,

O Cæsar, thou art living yet!

but who would think of comparing the influence of Cæsar with the spell that Jesus has cast over the minds of men? As one great soul said of Him, "Mightiest among the holy, and holiest among the mighty, who lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of time into new channels and still governs the ages"; and another, "The three short years of the active life of Jesus have done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of the philosophers and all the exhortations of the moralists." The life of Jesus, sir, and its inestimable influence must be accounted for, and in human nature as we know it, there is nothing which can explain the life and influence of Jesus. The only explanation is the explanation of the Incarnation, that God came to earth and filled a human nature with all the fulness of God.

CELESTIAL—What are those letters cut over the door of that building?

MORTAL—That is what we call a date. The M stands for a thousand, the C before the second M makes nine hundred, the double X stands for twenty, and the VII for seven. It means the year 1927 after Christ, the A and D being the

first letters of the Latin words for "In the year of our Lord." The birth of Christ was the watershed of history. His Incarnation is the division of human history.

CELESTIAL—He was born, then, 1927 years ago?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Had man been long on the earth before that?

MORTAL—For many ages.

CELESTIAL—And yet God did not come to save him until nineteen hundred and twenty-seven years ago?

MORTAL—We believe that He planned to save him the moment he needed to be saved. But the plan was not carried out until Christ was born.

CELESTIAL—Can you explain to me why God waited so long?

MORTAL—No; I cannot. He came in the fulness of time. That I believe; but why the time was not full until the date of the birth of Christ, I do not know. The Incarnation was not limited, remember, by anything in God, but by the sad condition in which God found man. In that long, starry night of heathenism, "full of darkness and fear, of mysterious presage also," and in that dawn of Judaism, "full of fresh hope and promise for the rising of the sun,"

there was, I can see, a divine preparation, until that night and that dawn both lost themselves in the sunlight of Christianity. But I cannot tell you why the preparation was necessary, as if God were reduced to processes and expedients. I see only this little segment of time, and therefore cannot judge as to why God has done what He has done, or that it might have been better done. With Him there is neither beginning nor ending of days. Time is the measurement of man, and I can apply its rule to man only, not to God. As one of our great souls has written:

> The ways of Providence are not confined within narrow limits; He hurries not Himself to display the consequences of the principle that He yesterday laid down; He will draw it out in the lapse of ages when the hour is come, and even according to our reasoning, logic is not the less sure because it is slow. Providence is unconcerned as to time; His march is like that of the fabulous deities of Homer through space; "He takes a step, and ages have elapsed." With Him, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

We must remember that, sir, when we apply the standards of time to the transactions of the Almighty.

CELESTIAL—Your doctrine of the Incarnation is truly a sublime doctrine, and I wonder that there should be mortals so blind and base

among you to wish that it were not true. Nor would I willingly say a word that would make you hold to it less firmly, for I see it is the star of humanity's hopes. But my instructions are to look deep into every belief held by man, and in order that I may be fully informed as to the reason for the faith that is in you, I fear I must raise one more, perhaps a fatal, objection.

MORTAL—What is that, sir?

CELESTIAL—It is the place man holds in time, and the place man's world holds in the universe. You have talked to me as if this world of yours were the only world and man the only creature of importance in the vast universe, as much above all else as he is above the beasts of the field that perish and go down into the dust. But your geology has dethroned man in time, and shown him that he was a comparatively late arrival; your astronomers have dethroned him in space, and your biologists have dethroned him in nature of being. Man's world is not the central thing in the universe, a sort of platform built for his pleasure and upon which he might stand and watch all else wheel past him in review. Now you know that your earth is one star, one planet, of one system that is one of millions upon millions that wheel in majestic silence round their central suns. For man, the only creature in the universe, and living in a world that was

God's chief work and glory, the idea of an incarnation would be reasonable. But are you, vain creature, fantastic folly, arrogant enough to imagine the great Maker of all worlds would pay such attention to one tiny emmet of a world, so minute that it is lost in the spatial vastness of creation; that this dust on which we stand, could have been the stage for that great drama of redemption; or that the Pure and Ineffable God could have condescended to take the fallen nature of this degraded species on this most insignificant of worlds?

MORTAL—You speak, sir, as if the difficulty in believing in God's thought for this world were the result of new conquests and acquisitions in the field of knowledge. But you are mistaken. It is true that, by the telescope, man has discovered that there is a system in every star, and by the microscope he has discovered that there is a world in every atom; but long before either of these instruments had been dreamed of, man was conscious of his physical insignificance. It can never have seemed to the most ignorant of observers that the universe was other than a vast system. The shepherd singer, keeping his flocks by Judea's hills, saw the moon take up her nightly tale, saw the Mazzaroth come forth in his season and the Arcturus with his attendant sons. He marveled at the ordinances of the heavens,

the sweet influence of the Pleiades, and the bands of Orion. The heavens so vast, and man so small! "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor." Thus did He anticipate by centuries the objection which you raise to the Incarnation on the ground of man's smallness and this world's insignificance. But the glory of the heavens did not make him forget the dignity of man, how, though he were as nothing compared with the stars and the moon, yet God had made him so that he could think about them, how though the frailest of created things, he was little lower than the angels. And what has the time of man's arrival on this globe to do with his fitness for redemption? Because some hideous and now extinct reptile preceded him on the earth by some thousands of æons, you would not argue that therefore man was of less value in the sight of God than those reptiles. It is not *when* man came, but *what* man is. And as for size, you cannot apply the foot rule to man's place in the thought of the Almighty. Jupiter is twelve hundred times larger than our earth, and if there be inhabitants

there, those inhabitants might be twelve hundred times as large as man, or a mile and more in stature. But how absurd it would be to count them therefore as of more value in the sight of God than a man on this planet!

> Were I so tall to reach the pole,
> Or grasp the ocean with my span,
> I must be measured by my soul;
> The mind's the standard of the man.

My world might be the smallest of inhabited worlds, a mote of dust lost in the interior and ulterior spaces of the creation, but that God should, among so many worlds, remember this little world of mine, and that He should have come Himself in the form of its fallen inhabitants to save them from the moral pestilence which was destroying them, is to me not unworthy or unthinkable in God, but serves only to reveal the power of His love and display the exquisite tenderness of His affections. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth!

> This world too small for love divine? Is God not Infinite?
> If so, His love is infinite. Too small!
> One famished babe meets pity oft from man
> More than an army slain! Too small for love!
> Was earth too small to be of God created?
> Why, then, too small to be redeemed?

And just as I do not think that man is too small to be redeemed, nor his world too mean a stage for the Incarnation, neither am I so foolish as to imagine that my world is the only world affected by that glorious redemption. I know how world is related to world in its rush through the ether, and if related as to physical life, why not as to spiritual? It may be that the moral pestilence which has devastated our world, has devastated other worlds, and they, too, are to be redeemed by this redemption of which we see only a part in the Incarnation. Who knows but that holy sages and prophets there, too, have yearned for His salvation, and that there, too, they have found Him mighty to save? Who knows but that some guileless virgin there, too, conceived and bore a Son, and that the plains of other worlds than ours have echoed with the angelic proclamation, "Peace on earth, good will to men"? The Christ who created all the worlds, He, too, may redeem them all. But if, on these countless worlds, there should exist no single form of life, fallen or unfallen, and man were the only moral being created by the Almighty, still man himself, yea, if what that Incarnate God told is true, one solitary man would be worth all the lavish outlay of the Divine beneficence and redeeming power. Or, if those other worlds which in myriads whirl round us, each

with other forms of life than ours, teem with sinless and happy beings, still would the God I adore come down to save this one lost world, because He loves the world. Numbers, distance, space, magnitude, all disappear and are resolved into nothingness before the advent of love. For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for it. He Himself, when in our sinful flesh, told man of a shepherd who had a hundred sheep; but one was missing. And the shepherd left the ninety and nine in the wilderness and went after that which was lost until he found it. And when he had found it, he called together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." Likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need not repentance. Though this world be the only lost world, still the fact that it is lost makes God come to seek it. His sinless beings may adore Him day and night; the heavens may declare His glory and the firmament show His handiwork. But I believe that the adorations of those sinless angels and the procession of those myriad worlds bring no such joy to the Eternal Heart as when on this world one lost, scarred sinner turns in repentance unto God and accepts the gift of His forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of the Son of God!

CELESTIAL—Mortal, your words fill me with sadness. When I hear you speak of your Immanuel, your God becoming man, I could almost wish that my own world had been a fallen world, so that it might have known the glory of the Incarnation, God in Christ reconciling man to Himself.

VI

Common Sense and the Atonement

THE GREAT APOSTLE of the Christian religion once said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." We come now to that doctrine of Christianity which is both its glory and its offense, the doctrine of the Cross. The apostle spoke of the "offense of the Cross." Literally he said the "scandal" of the Cross. To us, in this twentieth century of Christian history, it is well-nigh impossible to have that first thought of the Cross which was in the minds of men who heard the doctrine then and scoffed at it. The Cross was the "cursed tree," the sign of ignominy and degradation and brutality and crime and shame. Our modern word "gallows" is about as near as we can come to the meaning of the Cross when Christ died upon it. Both as a symbol and as a doctrine, the Cross was an offense and a stumblingblock to the men of that day. But that particular offense has passed completely away. The word conveys to us no thought of shame or degradation, but the very opposite. The sign of shame has now become the emblem of an universal church. It is the ground plan of our churches, it shines in the

sunlight upon a thousand spires and towers; it is worn as a badge of mercy upon the sleeve of the soldier, and it adorns the book of prayer and the breast of woman.

But the offense, the scandal, of the Cross as a doctrine still remains. It divides churches and separates between Christians, or rather, it sharply defines who is a Christian and who is not. Those who accept it, glory in it; it is their sole hope and their chief joy. Those who do not accept it, despise it. A man might state his belief in the being and goodness of God, he might revere and venerate the lawgivers and prophets and apostles of the Old Testament; he might hail with delight the advent of the Son of God, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into glory, and His coming again to judge the earth; but unless the Cross means to him that Christ died for his sins and thereby saves him from eternal death, he has missed the whole meaning of Christianity. The Cross is not an easy doctrine to accept. It is no respecter of man's pride. It bids the murderer and the pure sage and chaste philosopher alike prostrate themselves in the dust and cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It condemns everybody, irrespective of knowledge or culture or intellect or esteem of man; yet it condemns only that it may save and justify. The Cross is not your

enemy; it is your friend. That is the way I would like to present it to you, but to do that I must tell all that the Cross has to say. If I speak only of the cruel death, the sad loneliness of the dying Saviour, the immortal words of forgiveness for those who did the wrong, the way in which that death has always touched the heart of mankind, and how the recollection that Christ died thus has helped to make men better and in their hours of mortal agony has been a stay and comfort to them—I have said what is true, but I have left unsaid the main thing, that the Cross was an altar where the Eternal Son of God offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of men. That is the main thing, that the important thing; and it is that and that alone which has kept Christianity a power in the world for nineteen centuries. Do you tell me of beautiful, useful lives of men and women who did not receive the doctrine of the Cross? I say without the least hesitation that they are on a far lower level than the beautiful and useful lives of men who have received the doctrine of the Cross. Do you tell me of churches yesterday, today, to-morrow, perhaps, whose ministry is pure, whose members may be filled with good works and kindness and garbed in reverence, and yet those churches do not preach the Cross as the plan and wisdom of God? I again say without the least hesitation

that such churches exist only because there are churches which do teach the doctrine of the Cross. Their light is but the reflected light of the Cross.

When our Lord lay dying on the Cross, one of the malefactors who hung at His side turned upon Him his dying gaze and prayed, "O Jesus, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom!" He was the first fruits of the Cross; he, first of all, in advance of disciple and companion, sage and scholar. His mind, lightened by the sacrificial love of Jesus, saw that His death established a Kingdom of mercy and forgiveness; and ever since that dying thief made his appeal to Jesus, men have turned to the Crucified One for help and for hope. Take away the Cross and you blot out the sun in the Christian heavens. And who can tell of the great host of those who have come up out of great tribulation because they trusted in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world?

But from the very beginning the Cross had its enemies. "I tell you with weeping," said the apostle, "that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." Under many disguises that enmity still burns. Any man who so describes the great transaction of Cavalry that a doubt is left as to whether Christ died a beautiful, pathetic, accidental, but not penal and sacrificial death, is an

enemy of the Cross. A few years ago, the best-known financier of the world died and left this remarkable will:

> I commit my soul into the hands of my Saviour, in full confidence that, having redeemed it and washed it in His most precious blood, He will present it faultless before the throne of my Heavenly Father, and I entreat my children to maintain and defend, at all hazard and at any cost of personal sacrifice, the blessed doctrine of the complete atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, once offered, and through that alone.

Much of the vague and hesitating and mystical presentation of the doctrine of the Cross is due in the first place to man's shrinking from declaring the fact that is presupposed by the Cross, namely, that the whole world lieth in sin. Then, because we cannot see just how the death of Christ affects our lives and our guilt and corruption, we are tempted to try to make His death mean something else, something very good and noble and useful, it may be, but not what the Gospel declares itself to be. The writers of the New Testament, over and over again, tell us what the Cross meant, and that in the simplest of language. It is impossible to think that they did not know the meaning of words they used; and with that careful and reiterated statement as

to the meaning of the Cross, it is a logical impossibility to reconcile any other view. We waive for the moment the question as to which of the views of the Cross may be correct, but that there is a difference between Christ dying for my sins and bearing my penalties, and Christ dying for any other purpose—that any mind, however untutored, can discern. There is, then, a clear and unmistakable statement of what the Cross was, told so simply and plainly that any man who knows it can repeat it, for it is a story, not an argument; an event, not a philosophy. At the same time, those men who tell the story so enthusiastically and straightforwardly never once try to explain why it has the effects that they claimed for it. I challenge any man to tell me of a single passage in the Bible which says *why* Christ's righteousness can meet my responsibilities and reconcile me to God. They have much to say as to the manner and the fact of the transaction, but not one of the apostles tells you *why* the transaction can so affect the lives and destinies of man. I am glad that this is so. I am glad that not even mystical John, with all his flights into the unknown, ever attempted to explain it. I am glad that even St. Paul, with all his mental acumen, taking us back to times eternal when God purposed to redeem man, ever paused and called back the armies of his intellect

before the transcendent mystery of Calvary. Yea, I am glad that the Divine Victim Himself uttered no syllable of explanation. He said He was the Good Shepherd, and at length the Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep; but how the dying Shepherd saves the sheep, that He never explained. So, as we speak of Common Sense and The Atonement, do not imagine that we are so foolish as to offer any suggestion as to why and how the Cross saves us. All that we can do is to repeat the fact, to show by reason and observation that the fact fits a human need, and that fact, although standing by itself, in no way contradicts the knowledge and the hope that we have of God. In the words of Mr. A. J. Balfour: "We do not step over a precipice because we are dissatisfied with all the attempts to account for gravitation. Because men cannot compress within the rigid limits of some legal formula a mystery which, unless it were too vast for our full intellectual comprehension, would surely be too narrow for our spiritual needs, the mystery of the Cross itself is rejected." Great is the mystery of the Cross; but it is a mystery that meets the mystery of man's sin, and sorrow, and hope that is infinite.

Our friend from the celestial world returned to his own kingdom with the news that man's condition was not hopeless; that a Saviour had

appeared on the earth and had taken the form of a man. Man's God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. A great plan was being carried out by a Divine Agent, the Son of God, for the redemption and restoration of mankind. But, when they question him as to how that Incarnate God effects the difficult task of reconciling alienated man to his God, and restoring him out of the ruins of his sin and rebellion, their ambassador is unable to tell them. As these angelic beings desire to look further into man's redemption, they again send him back to prosecute his inquiries. He arrives on a Sabbath and we enter a church. It happens to be the Communion Sabbath and the Lord's Supper is being celebrated. After the service he joins me.

CELESTIAL—That was a solemn service. When I came first I saw a white cloth on the table, snow white. Then, at a given point in the service, I saw grave gentlemen come reverently forward and carefully remove the cloth, disclosing silver tankards filled with wine and silver plates filled with bread. Then one lifted the cup and the bread and, after blessing them, gave them to the elders, and they in turn to the people, saying as he did so, "Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me. For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the

Lord's death till He come." The scene moved me; it will linger in my memory and I fear that I shall be sorry when I go back that there are no such services in my own world. But what did it all mean? Please, sir, inform me.

MORTAL—It was the celebration of the death of Christ. When you were here the last time, we were celebrating His birth. Now we have been celebrating His death.

CELESTIAL—Celebrating His death? I can understand why you want to celebrate His birth, for He was born to save you. But why should you celebrate His death? It cannot be that that glorious Being of whom you told me on my last visit failed in the great mission that He came to undertake for man?

MORTAL—No, He did not fail; He saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied. He succeeded wondrously. He went forth conquering and to conquer. But He conquered by dying. That is why we celebrate His death.

CELESTIAL—Did He have to die?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—When and how did He die?

MORTAL—He was crucified by the Romans under Pontius Pilate.

CELESTIAL—But scores of other men have died. What was there peculiar in the death of Christ?

MORTAL—He died for the world.

CELESTIAL—You mean that His life and death were a benefit to mankind, like the death of other of your renowned mortals?

MORTAL—No; that is not what I mean. What He did was, of course, for the benefit of the world. It helped the world; even those who do not believe in Christ profit by His death. But when I say He died *for* the world, I mean that He died in place of man.

CELESTIAL—But men still die.

MORTAL—Yes; but they do not need to die any more as sinners, and unreconciled to God. The sting of death is sin, and Christ plucked the sting of death.

CELESTIAL—But why did Christ, or anyone else, need to die to save man?

MORTAL—Because of man's condition. First, corruption; second, guilt. There is no doubt about the corruption. We see its fruits every day. You saw them yourself on your third visit. But man is not only corrupt, he is condemned.

CELESTIAL—I see he is corrupt; the stream of his life is foul, hence the fountain, his nature, must be too. Could not the corruption be cured without this death?

MORTAL—No; the will of man is perverted. He will choose evil.

CELESTIAL—But what do you mean by condemnation?

MORTAL—I mean that man is a sinner, a lawbreaker. He has broken the law of God, and so is subject to the miseries of this life, death here and death hereafter.

CELESTIAL—Man's condition, then, may be summed up in the word "death"?

MORTAL—Yes; the penalty of sin is first physical death, then spiritual death; the death of virtue and acceptability in the sight of God in this life, and in the world to come eternal death.

CELESTIAL—What is eternal death? Can a man be always dying?

MORTAL—No; not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense he can. Eternal death would be the continuance of the fallen estate of man in this world in the next, only there would be no ray of hope. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

CELESTIAL—Then man is both corrupt and guilty?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But how does he know he is guilty?

MORTAL—His conscience tells him that. And that has issued in altars and rites and sacrifices which bear the evidence that man has felt him-

self to be not only corrupt, but guilty; not only unclean, but under a curse.

CELESTIAL—The problem, then, confronting God is first how to lift the penalty upon man, and then how to lift man out of the corruption into which his nature has fallen. But why does He not just make man good?

MORTAL—He cannot make man good; man must choose to be good. But the trouble is he cannot even choose to be good. His nature has suffered such a dislocation that he is unable perfectly to keep the law of God. Hence, he is always in evil and under the penalty. But even if by some means God could make all men good, still past guilt would remain. He must be cleansed from the guilt and stain of sin. But first, the guilt. You see, this is the difficulty. You have a God who is holy and just; a man who is corrupt and guilty. What is to be done?

CELESTIAL—Why not destroy man?

MORTAL—Because God is merciful.

CELESTIAL—But if He is merciful, why not freely forgive man? You forgive your friends and companions who offend you. Why not God?

MORTAL—Even where I forgive there must be some acknowledgment of sin, else how can I forgive? But man has offended against the holiest. There must be grounds of his forgiveness, and man is unable to furnish the grounds.

CELESTIAL—And what grounds have been furnished?

MORTAL—The satisfaction of Christ.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean by that?

MORTAL—I mean that He satisfied divine justice. By assuming our nature, He assumed our guilt and our curse, and so was made liable to all sin brings. He died on the Cross as a sacrifice for sin. He bore the chastisement of our peace. With His stripes we are healed. He was sinless and therefore innocent, and if He suffered and died, it must have been for others. He said it was for us and taught His disciples to say the same thing.

CELESTIAL—You mean, then, that you are a sinner deserving punishment at the hands of God, that you are not able of yourself to render God the satisfaction which will save you from the punishment; but that Christ comes and takes your place and assumes your guilt and is punished instead of you.

MORTAL—Yes, He died the just for the unjust. He was my Substitute.

CELESTIAL—Was God angry, and must needs have some victim?

MORTAL—No, God is just and holy, and therefore He cannot clear the guilty, He cannot treat a sinful man as though he were not sinful. But in His love, God has devised a means

whereby He could be just and yet men would have a chance to escape the penalty. That way is the Cross.

CELESTIAL—But how is it that Christ, an innocent man, the Son of God, is accepted as your offering and sacrifice and that His death thus benefits you?

MORTAL—Because God so wills it.

CELESTIAL—Yes, but I would like to see *why* and in what way His righteousness and His death affect your unrighteousness and your penalty?

MORTAL—That, sir, has never been explained. There is not a syllable in the Gospel which in any way tries to explain it. All the Gospel does is to declare that it is so, for all who wish to profit by the sacrifice. If language means anything, then the Gospel tells me that I am a sinner and as such doomed to death, physical, spiritual, and eternal; but Christ died for me. He gave Himself for me. He bore my sins on the tree. He died for me, not merely in the sense of in my behalf, but in my stead. But never, never, is the veil lifted and man told how it is that Christ thus dying satisfied the law of God and redeems us from sin.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.

CELESTIAL—Then you believe something that has never had any explanation, not a ray of light, not a syllable for the reason of it?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But why?

MORTAL—Because I feel the need of what the Cross has done for me; that I am not able to satisfy the law of God. I cannot save myself. If someone does not do it for me, then I perish.

CELESTIAL—So you base your hope of eternal life on an innocent man's having been punished in your stead, and you the guilty man?

MORTAL—I do.

CELESTIAL—Do you remember the Court House to which you took me on my first visit to your world?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Well, there I saw a murderer sentenced to be hanged for his crime. Suppose the judge had said: "The man who has been convicted is guilty of this crime, but in his place I will order another man to be executed." And suppose he had chosen you? Would that have been just? Would any satisfaction have been rendered the broken law?

MORTAL—No; it would have been unjust. We carry out our justice on the principle that it is better that a thousand guilty men should go free than that one innocent man should suffer unjustly.

CELESTIAL—Why, then, are you so base and craven as to be willing to accept what an innocent person has suffered for you, and how could such a God be worthy of your adoration?

MORTAL—The difference is this: It is inconceivable that one man should substitute another to suffer for him, or that the innocent man's sufferings should expiate the guilt of the guilty man. But it is not inconceivable that God should do this. The law and the right are what He rules, and if He rules that the sufferings of Christ should expiate the guilt, then it must be right. I cannot see how or why. But the Cross tells me that is God's plan. You spoke of my being punished instead of the murderer. It would be unjust. But suppose I loved that murderer as much as I loved my own life, and volunteered to die in his stead, and by thus dying for him I satisfied the demands of the broken law, did all that justice called for, and in addition to expiating the man's crime should, by dying for him, also supply him the means of a complete reformation of character. You would call that a glorious and noble transaction. With

man we feel that is impossible. But there is no reason why it should be impossible with God. In fact, it is as near as we can come to a description of what Christ did for man on the cross. His death was penal, that is, it was a punishment for sin. It was vicarious. Christ was not a sinner, and if He suffered death, the penalty of sin, it was for others. It was expiatory. It removed the guilt of man, and thus made reconciliation or atonement possible with man and God. Thus you see the purpose and end of the incarnation; God was in Christ reconciling man to Himself.

CELESTIAL—Outside of the Christian religion, is there anything that in any way corresponds to your Christian idea of a vicarious sacrifice, an innocent man suffering for a just, a good man for a bad?

MORTAL—Yes; the world is filled with it. The incarnation is a fact that has no analogy in nature, but the atonement is a fact with a principle which runs through all the activities of life. You think it preposterous that Christianity should invite you to accept the benefits secured by an innocent and unoffending victim. But think of the whole pre-Christian system of sacrifice. Sometimes beasts were laid on the altar, sometimes children, maidens and sometimes men. To us it is a revolting story. But it clearly shows how the idea of expiation of guilt

by the sufferings of an innocent victim is not contrary to man's common sense, but in keeping with it. More universal than man's belief in immortality, more universal than man's belief in the unity of God, has been his belief in the efficacy of an innocent sacrifice for sin. Then there was the whole elaborate sacrificial ritual of the Hebrew religion which our Christian writer said was a shadow of the things to come. It too prepared man for the revelation of the doctrine of the Cross.

CELESTIAL—I take you to mean, then, that the whole system of religion, heathen and Jewish, was of a nature to prepare man for the revelation of the truth that Christ bore our transgressions?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But outside of religion is there any analogy of this transaction?

MORTAL—Yes, the doctrine of substitution, the principle of vicarious suffering, is to be discovered everywhere in life.

CELESTIAL—For instance?

MORTAL—In the first place, the weak suffer for the strong. Men call it the survival of the fittest. But it means only that the weak must suffer for the strong. The sick and diseased give place to the sound and the strong. The fierce and swift prey upon the timid and slow. Every

worm that is cloven, every beast that succumbs to the fury of its enemy, subserves another's end. Coming a little higher, we see how the strong suffer for the weak. The mother descends into the valley of death that the child may be born. Then the child lives by the care and toil of the mother. The strong is spending itself in behalf of the weak.

CELESTIAL—But that is all within the realm of natural instinct. Where is there an instance of voluntary suffering by the strong or the wise in behalf of the weak, the poor, the ignorant?

MORTAL—There are so many examples of what you ask, sir, that I hardly know where to begin my illustration. But let us start with Father Damien.

CELESTIAL—Who was he?

MORTAL—A Catholic missionary to the lepers of Molakai. He went among them, ministered to their festering sores, told them of the love of Christ and at length, contracting their disease, died among them and for them. He was like a snowdrop that amid the solitude of winter bears the banner of the spring and dares to declare the coming of a gentler sway.

> So didst thou, Damien, when the glow
> Of faith and hope was waning low,
> For souls bewintered dare the snow
> And lead the way.

CELESTIAL—But you still cling to religion. Let me have an illustration of this principle in human action apart from religion, separated from priests or ministers of religion.

MORTAL—Come with me.

CELESTIAL—Where are we now?

MORTAL—This is Harper's Ferry.

CELESTIAL—What happened here?

MORTAL—This is where John Brown was captured. That river is the Shenandoah, this the Potomac. Over yonder is Maryland. One night he and his men came down from their farmhouse among the hills and seized the arsenal that stood here by the river. Many of his men were killed. Two of his sons perished by his side. He himself was painfully wounded. He was taken to Charlestown and there, after a trial, was convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged.

CELESTIAL—But what was all this about? Why did he attack the arsenal, and what did he plan to do?

MORTAL—His plan was to lead the slaves in a revolt against their masters. He believed that slavery was wrong. He could hardly have believed that his plan would succeed. But he knew that it would call attention to the sin of slavery, and he was ready to lay down his life for ignorant black slaves. He said when he was in the

jail that he was of more use for the purpose of hanging than for any other purpose. They took him out and hanged him and thought they had put an end to his work. But it was only the beginning. Within three years great armies marched by the spot where his gallows had been erected, singing:

> John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
> But his soul goes marching on.

CELESTIAL—What did they mean by saying his soul was "marching on"?

MORTAL—They meant that his death in behalf of the negro was a mighty influence working to liberate the slave and make him a man.

CELESTIAL—Then John Brown died in behalf of the negro?

MORTAL—Yes, his was a vicarious death.

CELESTIAL—Where are we now?

MORTAL—This, sir, is Gettysburg, one of the great battlefields of our Civil War. These pleasant fields and grassy slopes were once covered with the dead bodies of soldiers who fell in defense of the liberties of their country. Our great President Lincoln, of whom I told you on your second visit, stood just there where that white shaft now is and dedicated this field as a resting place for the brave men who here died in battle. He said of them:

> We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that this nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. It is for us the living to be dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

CELESTIAL—Then these soldiers whose dust lies here died that their country might live?

MORTAL—Yes, and that liberty and justice might live. I have tried to show you how through all existence there runs this principle of vicarious sacrifice. A great part of the earth we live upon is made up of the dead bodies of creatures. They, in a sense, died for us. The fuel that heats us, the light that relieves our darkness, is the result of death. In times so remote that the mind staggers in trying to imagine it, those plants died that man today might have light and heat. We have seen, too, how the strong give themselves for the weak, how the mother spends herself for the child, and that instinct of paternal

and maternal sacrifice burns on from generation to generation. We have seen how the wise and the good, like John Brown, died for the depraved and the degraded slaves; how the liberties which we as a nation enjoy to-day have been purchased with blood. Other men have labored and we have entered into their labors. It is the rule of the world, too, that the innocent should suffer with the guilty, and sometimes for them. The innocent child suffers because of the sins of its parents; the husband is a drunkard and the wife suffers; the son is disgraced and the mother is the chief sufferer. All this goes to show, sir, how the principle of sacrifice, that one should suffer for another, that the higher should stoop for the lower, that the wise and the pure and the good and the innocent should suffer for the ignorant and the impure and the wicked and the guilty is a law of life. Therefore, when the Cross tells me of the Son of God dying for me and by His death clearing away my guilt and securing the grounds of my redemption, it tells me of the Highest and Loveliest Being of which man can conceive giving Himself for the highest and best of creation, man made in the image of God, for "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" to die for him.

CELESTIAL—You have showed me how the scarlet thread of vicarious suffering runs through

all Nature and through the history of your race. Do I understand, then, that Christ's Atonement is just the supreme manifestation of this great cosmic law that all life advances through the sacrifices of the fittest and the best?

MORTAL—Far from that. The death of Christ for sin stands by itself. There has been nothing like it in the history of the universe, and there will never be such a death again.

CELESTIAL—But you spoke of mothers and friends and patriots and martyrs?

MORTAL—Yes, but only to show how the idea of one receiving help from the sufferings of another is a reasonable one, fitting in with man's experience. I did not mean that the patriot's death, or the mother's death, is like the death of Christ. The death of Christ is a grand and awful fact, a fact which stands by itself and cannot be measured or estimated by anything else in all the universe. Christ in His death not only conferred a great blessing upon man, but by His death He made it possible for man to be reconciled to God; and that was a benefit no other could have bestowed upon man. Only Christ could take the sinner's place and bear his sins. He prayed in His agony in Gethsemane, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But it was not possible. Only Christ could pay the price of our salvation.

CELESTIAL—Then men are saved by virtue of Christ?

MORTAL—By that alone. He is the way.

CELESTIAL—But how about Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel? And the noble sages of the heathen world, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle? They never heard of Christ. But if a man is saved only by believing in Christ as the One who has died for his sins, they must have perished eternally. According to your Gospel, all who died before the year A. D. 1 have been lost.

MORTAL—I know nothing about the destiny of these men. Although the Atonement was a transaction of time, it was not a temporary thing. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It may be that the benefits of His redemption are applied in some way to those who have had no chance to believe on Him. Perhaps not. I do not know, nor must I think that God fears to bestow favors and scatter distinctions in the kingdom of redemption. It may be that in the realm of grace, there will be found the same distinctions which prevail in the realm of nature and of providence, for it is "not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." God has made a distinction between men and angels. The angels sinned and were thrust down to the realms of darkness and despair, but when man sinned, an

atonement was provided for his salvation. After all, I must face this question of the Atonement, not in the light of how it might affect someone else, but in the light of how it will affect me. Shall I receive the Atonement?

CELESTIAL—But how about the good and learned and merciful men who, in your own day, do not receive the Atonement? Did they not need to have Christ die for them?

MORTAL—Yes, Christ died for all, but if all had not sinned, then had not Christ died for all.

CELESTIAL—But what about these good, moral men who know that Christ died but refuse to ask God for the benefits of His death? You buried a man the other day. He was a good husband and father; he served his country in the army in time of danger for half a century; he was faithful in his labor and kind-hearted in his home. But he died without believing in Christ as his Saviour. What are you going to do with such a man as that?

MORTAL—I, sir, do nothing with him. I am not his judge. I do not fix his destiny.

CELESTIAL—But what did you say as you stood over him? What did you think?

MORTAL—I was careful not to say what you evidently expect me to say, that the fact that the man had lived a good moral life, as the world styles it, guaranteed his salvation. Let the

man who has lived a good life have all the credit for it here. But God tells me in the doctrine of the Cross that the only credit that counts in the day of judgment is the credit that Christ provides for man by His death. And I do not hesitate to say, that, in my opinion, it is a very dangerous thing for any man to ignore the remedy that God has provided for him. If God had provided no remedy, then man might have been justified in concluding that he needed no remedy and no salvation. But when the remedy has been provided and the guilt specified, he must be wiser than God who concludes that he does not require it. I believe, further, that in spite of all you will hear about the noble lives of unbelievers, the best lives, by far, have been those who were ready to describe themselves as sinners and whose only plea was "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" and whose only glory was in the Cross of Christ. You, sir, inhabitant of some world, I know not where, have come down to earth that you might look into man's belief concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, for so one of of the apostles wrote that the angels desire to look into it. But we have been told that the disciple whom Jesus loved was permitted to enter heaven, the man of earth and of time for a little was freed from the limitations of time and space

and permitted to view the destruction of the kingdom of evil and the victory of the Kingdom of Christ. Instead of an angel being conducted through earth, it was a man being conducted through heaven by an angel. He saw a great white throne, out of which proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices, and before the throne was a sea of glass mingled with fire. And after this he beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." And one of those ineffable beings who stood before the throne said to this wondering disciple, "Sir, what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" Unable to answer, he said, "Sir, thou knowest." Then said the one who had asked him, "These are they which have come up out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him night and day in His temple. And He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

That great company, sir, grows from year to year, expands from age to age. They are coming from the east, the west, the north, the south, from every land, from every race, from every church. They differ in their speech and color and race, but all are one in Him who died for them, and all agree in the song which they sing to the Lamb which was slain, for all have received the Atonement and have been accepted in the Beloved.

I asked them whence their victory came,
They with united breath
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.

VII.

Common Sense and the Resurrection

ONE DAY I said to a gentleman, by whom I had been entertained in St. Louis, that I would like to visit the grave of General Sherman. He gladly consented to take me there, and we drove through the outskirts of the city until we came to the Catholic cemetery where the dust of the great soldier reposes. In the summer of 1863, his much-loved son, William, was stricken with the fever at Vicksburg and died at Memphis. He was buried first at Lancaster, in Ohio, but after the war, his body was transferred to Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis. The men of the Thirteenth United States Regulars had adopted the child as one of their own and had given him the rank of sergeant, which he accepted with all seriousness. Over his grave may be seen the stone erected by the men of that regiment and the words "Our Little Sergeant." Beside him lies a brother born the year after he died, on the other side his mother, and by her side the father and husband. Some months after his child died, Sherman, speaking of his future command, said, "As soon as the spring campaign is over I want to come here and look after the

Mississippi. Like the story of 'Gil Blas.' 'Here lies my soul.' Though Willy died here, his pure and holy spirit will hover over this, the grand artery of America. I want to live out here and die here also, and do not care if my grave be like De Soto's in its muddy waters." And there he lies in that woodland cemetery with those he loved about him, and the river stealing silently past his sepulchre as it flows through a country that is one and inseparable, unvexed to the sea.

Across a ravine was another cemetery, the Protestant, and toward this my friend now drove me. At the gate he halted and purchased a quantity of white carnations. After a while, we drew up by the side of a newly made grave, and on this grave he placed the green leaves and the white flowers, stood silent for a moment, and then reëntered his carriage. It was the grave of his wife. For fifty years he had lived alone, and then had married a beautiful and accomplished woman. Now he and four children were left with nothing but her memory. The great soldier, the faithful wife and mother, the newborn babe, the light-hearted lad—there they, or what had once been they, all lay—invisible, silent, together, and yet, alone. There is humanity; there is human life:

For all are meteors with different names,
And death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

The question of the Resurrection, then, is not one to which any who lives can be indifferent, for those who live shall die. In one of his great moments, the Apostle Paul said, "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." That is a very lofty and true description of the body of Christian belief. If only it had been kept in mind by those who have looked at the things that are seen and have confused the two worlds, many of the doubts and misgivings that have troubled honest souls never would have existed.

The popular and persistent demand that Christianity be dissociated from the facts is unreasonable, for in a religion of Incarnation and Redemption there must be certain outward facts which are to be subjected to the same evidence as any other facts in other spheres. The Resurrection has a profound spiritual meaning, but that meaning has for its vehicle a transaction in time. Either Christ rose out of the grave in which He had been laid or He did not rise. If He did rise, it is a stupendous fact which demands unusual evidence. The question, then, before us is this: What has Common Sense to say about the evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? At the outset let

us confess to the mighty issues which hinge upon this question. "If Christ is not risen, then is your faith vain." That was the verdict of one who suffered more and achieved more for Christianity than any other save its Divine Founder Himself. When one looks at Christianity, not in its segments, not in its by-products and indirect influences, but in the light of its solemn declarations and mighty assurances, it cannot be denied that if there is no Resurrection there is no Christianity. And when I say Christianity I do not mean the narrative of the holy life of Jesus of Nazareth when He was on earth and the way in which that story has touched the hearts of men, or the abiding power of the principles which He taught and for which He died. I mean by Christianity the great remedy which God has carried out, which we have been led to believe He has carried out for the redemption of mankind. Of course, without believing in a Resurrection, one could sit entranced by the music of the parables as they fall from the lips of Jesus, could marvel at His mighty works and weep over His cruel death.

But that is not Christianity, though it is as far as some men and some churches dare to venture. I do not know of a finer tribute ever paid to Jesus than the last lines in Renan's *Life of Jesus,* for he says, "Whatever the surprises of

the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; His legend will call forth tears without end; His sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." None but the fool would dispute the beauty and the justice of that tribute. But it is a tribute which would be unaffected by the truth or the falsehood of the Resurrection. And just a few sentences before that paragraph, Renan wrote, "The life of Jesus to the historian ends with the last sigh." The rock-hewn sepulchre, then, divides the river of Christian life and thought into two streams: on the one hand, pass those who revere the memory of Jesus and admire His precepts and are touched by the recital of His death on the cross; on the other, those who revere the memory of Jesus, admire His precepts and are touched by the recital of His death, and, in addition to that, worship a living Christ who died for their sins, rose again for their justification and ever liveth to make intercession for them. For those on this side, the life of Jesus ends with the last sigh on the cross, "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" For those on the other side, the life of Christ never ends—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Our celestial guest, having made his report

on the way in which means were devised for the reconciliation of man with God, is questioned as to the subsequent history of the Redeemer. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. Was that His end? Did He bring not only His mission but His life to a close when He cried out on the cross, "It is finished!"? He tells them that he had been so engrossed with men's explanations of how the death of Christ affected a means of reconciliation and forgiveness, and so amazed at the beauty and power of that remedy, that it had not occurred to him to inquire what then happened to Him who had performed the great and atoning transaction. To satisfy their curiosity as to this point, he again wings his way to terrestrial abodes. When last he came it was the "winter wild"; but now spring has blown her clarion o'er the dreaming earth and the whole world has suddenly awakened as if from the sleep of death. Migratory birds have come back from the south; the meadow brook runs free from the ice; the snow has melted on the hillsides; the trees put forth their tender leaves and wave aloft their blossoms; and every wind that blows seems freighted with spices and sweet odors, "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth; the time for the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

As he wanders through the country, he is almost tempted to wish that he was an inhabitant of such a world; but then he remembers its crimes and sorrows and cruelties and injustices and takes back his wish. It is Sunday again, and the music of the church bells and the sound of the singing draw him into the church. Everywhere there are flowers, most of them white; the people are dressed in bright colors, and the whole scene is in harmony with the world outside. The hymns they sing have a note of liberation and joyousness, a full-throated melody like that of the birds that have returned from the south. He hears words like these:

> Lift up, lift up your voices now;
> The whole wide world rejoices now;
> The Lord hath triumphed gloriously,
> The Lord shall reign victoriously.
> In vain with stone the cave they barred;
> In vain the watch kept ward and guard
> Majestic from the spoiled tomb,
> In pomp of silence Christ is come!
> He binds in chains the ancient foe;
> A countless host He frees from woe;
> And heaven's high portal open flies,
> For Christ is risen and man shall rise!

When the service is over he seeks me out.

CELESTIAL—Who is that ancient foe that has been conquered?

MORTAL—Man's greatest enemy, death.

CELESTIAL—And who has conquered him?

MORTAL—Christ. He hath triumphed gloriously. That is why we decorate our churches and sing these joyful hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Christ is risen!

CELESTIAL—The first time I came to your church, you were celebrating the birth of Christ; the last time you were celebrating His death; but now you celebrate His life. I left Him hanging on the cross between the two thieves. What happened after that?

MORTAL—About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. "All is over, the pain, the sorrow, human taunts, and fiendish spite." That night He was taken down from the cross, His body wrapped in a clean linen cloth and laid in a new grave hewn out of the rock, belonging to a councilor, Joseph of Arimathea. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed, leaving behind him Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.

CELESTIAL—Where were His disciples?

CELESTIAL—They had fled; they were afraid to be seen near His grave.

CELESTIAL—Then that was the end of Jesus?

MORTAL—No. The Roman governor, Pilate, had given the Jews permission to seal the sepulchre and guard it with soldiers. Early in the morning, that is, the morning of the third

day commencing with Friday, and therefore the morning of our Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, the two Marys came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away. Amazed, they ran back to the city and told Peter and John, who at once started to run to the sepulchre. John was more agile than Peter and reached the tomb first, and saw that it was empty, but was afraid to go down and investigate. As he stood looking in, Peter came panting up and without a moment's hesitation went down into the tomb and saw for a certainty that it was empty, and that gave John courage to go down, too, and he saw and believed. They returned to tell other disciples in the city. But in the meantime, Mary of Magdala had come back to the sepulchre. She did not believe that Jesus was risen; all she knew was that His body had been removed, and she had hoped to find it so that she might weep over it and anoint it with spices. As she looked into the tomb, half blinded by her tears, she heard a voice behind her, saying, "Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?" She, supposing him to be the gardener, said, "Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Then the stranger said to her, "Mary!" and she knew that it was the Lord. After that, during an interval of forty days, He appeared to different

disciples and groups of people at least ten times. Then He led them out toward Bethany, lifted His hands in blessing upon them, and as He prayed, a cloud received Him out of their sight.

CELESTIAL—Where did He go?

MORTAL—He was carried into heaven.

CELESTIAL—Where is heaven?

MORTAL—I cannot tell. I have never been there, nor have I ever seen anyone who has been there. But I believe that Christ is there. There is an earthly kingdom, and there is a spiritual kingdom. He reigns in that spiritual kingdom.

CELESTIAL—Were the disciples sorry when they saw Him disappear out of their sight?

MORTAL—Quite the contrary. They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.

CELESTIAL—You have asked me to believe wonderful things, that God came and took your form and lived among you; that He died on the cross and that that death opens a way of forgiveness and repentance. Now you ask me to believe that this man who had been crucified and laid in the grave was raised up the third day, appeared to His friends and spake with them, and then vanished out of their sight. Such a stupendous transaction, so contrary to your own experience and the history of mankind, must

have extraordinary evidence to support it before I shall believe it. My fellow citizens in my own world would laugh me to scorn if I returned and told them such a tale. I must hear the evidence before I believe it myself or before I return to tell others.

MORTAL—The evidence, sir, is open to your investigation, and it is an extraordinary witness.

CELESTIAL—Let me hear it.

MORTAL—There is, first of all, Christ's own predictions. When the Jews asked Him for a sign, He said He would give them the sign of Jonah, that as he was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, the Son of Man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He said, too, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again." Toward the close of His ministry, He took great pains to teach the disciples that He was to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

CELESTIAL—But that does not prove that He did rise. Because you say you will do a certain thing a year hence would be no proof two years hence that you did it.

MORTAL—No, it would not. But if Jesus said time and time again that He would rise again and yet did not rise, He was either an

imposter, or He was ignorant and self-deceived. But you have studied His history and His character with me. Did you discover anything that would support the belief that He was either ignorant or wilfully deceitful?

CELESTIAL—No. When He says that heaven and earth shall pass away but His word shall never pass away, I feel inclined to believe Him. But still, in addition to His own prophecies, I would like a different kind of evidence.

MORTAL—Of that there is no lack. The Christian Church is the monument to the Resurrection. It is here; it has been here for nineteen centuries, the greatest fact in history. It can easily be shown that the belief that built the Church was founded on the Resurrection. Now a belief that has had such incalculably momentous results must have had an adequate cause. This is the proposition: the Christian Church is here and has been here for centuries; it will remain. If one will take the trouble to read the New Testament and the early traditions, one will discover that the belief on which the Church rests is the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Either Christ rose, or He did not rise. If He did rise, you have a great effect, the Christian Church, resting upon a historic fact. If He did not rise, then the mightiest effect in history rests upon a delusion and a deception. That would

be a greater miracle than a thousand resurrections.

CELESTIAL—You mean, then, that Christian history is too great a fact to rest on a belief that is not true?

MORTAL—Common sense tells me that great effects must have a great cause. A belief in the resurrection without a fact of the resurrection would not be such a cause.

CELESTIAL—You have spoken thus far of two kinds of evidence—prophetic, Christ's own foretelling, and the witness in history, a mighty Church built up, against which the gates of hell have not been able to prevail, and that Church founded on the belief in the Resurrection.

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—What else?

MORTAL—The witness of those who saw the empty tomb or saw the risen Lord.

CELESTIAL—Where do we have this testimony?

MORTAL—In the New Testament.

CELESTIAL—What is the oldest and most carefully prepared testimony?

MORTAL—That of the Apostle Paul. He wrote the letter to the Corinthians within twenty years of the death of Christ. There he says:

> I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins

> according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

CELESTIAL—When did He appear to Paul?

MORTAL—At the time of his conversion, when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians. In the Book of Acts there are three accounts of that appearance. It was with Paul as with the other disciples; the appearance of the risen Jesus made him believe in Him, and sent him forth to preach His Gospel to the world. If you care to, you can read about Paul in the New Testament. If he is not the sort of man whose testimony would count in a court, then there is no man whose word is worth listening to.

CELESTIAL—Where are the other accounts?

MORTAL—Chiefly in the four Gospels. Two of the writers were disciples, Matthew and John; the other two, Mark and Luke, were not. But Luke was the companion of Paul and therefore in a position to know the facts, and Mark was under the influence of Peter.

CELESTIAL—Does Paul agree with the other four witnesses?

MORTAL—He cites two appearances that they do not mention. The appearance to himself, which was long after the Resurrection, they do not mention, for they are giving the story of what occurred at the time of the Resurrection. Then he mentions an appearance to James, the brother of the Lord. He mentions five appearances of Jesus besides the appearance to himself. The Gospels speak of nine.

CELESTIAL—But if Paul was giving testimony for the Resurrection, why did he not make use of every bit of evidence? Then you spoke of the women, the two Marys, coming to the tomb and what they saw and heard and did. But Paul does not mention them.

MORTAL—The Resurrection was a great day for woman. In the light of the Resurrection morn, woman was seen in her true self. When Christ rose, woman rose out of the grave of prejudice and custom and entered into her rights. Woman suffrage not founded on Christianity is false to history and stamped with base ingratitude. But Paul is giving evidence for the mightiest of all miracles. He lived in a day when woman's testimony was not considered of value. He himself taught that women in the Church should be silent. It is not strange, then,

that he omits the stories of the women and lays stress on the witness of the two leaders of the Church, Peter and James, and the other disciples. The writers of the Gospels are giving the history of the Resurrection. Paul is not doing that; he is giving the evidence for it and chooses the testimony that he thinks most important.

CELESTIAL—But he never speaks of an empty grave, or an angel, or an earthquake, or graveclothes lying folded. You tell me there is not a syllable in his writings about that. Is this not a good reason for thinking that he had never heard of such a thing, and that by Christ rising and appearing, he means some sort of spiritual appearance of Jesus, not the resurrection of the body that had been nailed to the cross and laid in the tomb?

MORTAL—To one familiar with the mind of Paul that is not strange. He is the author of the greatest passage on the Incarnation, yet he never mentions the visit of the angel, the trip to Bethlehem, the Virgin Mother and the adoring shepherds. But that is no reason to think that he had not heard of the birth of Jesus and was not familiar with the stories of the nativity. Moreover, he is impressing upon their minds the fact that Christ had risen, and the chief evidence for that fact was not that the tomb was empty,

but that Christ appeared. That made them believe in the Resurrection and explained to them why they found the tomb empty.

CELESTIAL—Read me the story of Matthew. . . . Now that of Mark. . . . Now Luke's. . . . Now John's. That is a wonderful story and certainly well told. When I listen to one it seems more beautiful than the other. The melody of the last is lost in the melody of the next. But now let us look dispassionately at those records. Try to put yourself in my place, not a man who has loved to read these stories from youth up and has always believed that they are true and that Jesus indeed rose, but one who hears it for the first time and would try the evidence. I am perplexed at the difference in these accounts. Matthew says they, the women, went to see the sepulchre; Mark says to anoint the body. Matthew says they came as it began to dawn; Mark that the sun was risen; Luke at early dawn, but John says that it was yet dark. But if the sun was risen, how could it be dark? Matthew says they found the grave closed, and witnessed the rolling away of the stone; Mark says they found the grave open and the stone already rolled away. Here we read they saw an angel, here two angels, here a young man, and here again two men. Matthew and Mark say the women went to tell the disciples in

Galilee of the risen Christ, but John and Luke say He appeared at once to them in Jerusalem. Matthew and John say the women departed in great joy to tell the disciples, but Mark says they were frightened and said nothing about it, told no one. I do not wish to appear too critical, nor to lay too great stress on the details; but it seems to me that the lack of consistency and agreement in this four-fold account by men who professed to know, would indicate an absence of certainty as to what did happen. How do you deal with these inconsistencies?

MORTAL—I do not deny that there appear to be inconsistencies as to these minor details, nor do I profess to be able to reconcile them, for the records are all the data we have at hand. But I note first that these inconsequential differences in the narratives show an absence of collusion on the part of the writers. If they had all said precisely the same thing and remembered precisely the same events, if John and Peter and Mark and Paul and Matthew and Luke had been touched by exactly the same happenings and sayings, and made an altogether similar record of it, then my faith in the records would not be nearly so strong as it is. In short, I am glad that they differ as they do. It is evidence that the narratives have not been invented. You read the war records which were

published by our Government and you will see how intelligent men differ in their recital of the account of the same battle; but as to the main facts, the losses, the issue at stake, the victory or the defeat—as to these, they all agree. I believe that the Bible is inspired and that this part of the Bible is inspired so as to bear witness to the fact of the Resurrection, but that does not compel me to believe that in the early morning, in the excitement of the great news, these women and these disciples should all act alike, or that afterward, in relating their experiences, they should agree as to every detail. I think that if we had all the facts at hand we should find that there is no real discrepancy or contradiction; but even if there is, that in no way invalidates the testimony as to the Resurrection. What is the main thing in this story, sir? I ask you to be candid and fair. Is it whether it was before the dawn, or at the dawn, or after the sun rose that the women came to the tomb? Is it whether they found the tomb closed or already open? Is it whether Jesus appeared in Galilee or in Jerusalem first? Is it whether there was a man or two men, an angel or two angels, at the tomb? Or, is the main thing in this four-fold story the fact that the grave was empty, that Christ was risen, that He appeared both in Jerusalem and in Galilee to His disciples?

CELESTIAL—That is the main thing.

MORTAL—And what do they testify as to that?

CELESTIAL—They all say it was even so. I abandon my objection on the ground of inconsistency, for I see that this is merely playing with the evidence, and I agree that the four Gospels and Paul and the Book of Acts bear witness that the grave was empty and that Christ rose. But good men have been mistaken sometimes. Perhaps those good men and women were mistaken.

MORTAL—How?

CELESTIAL—Perhaps Christ was not really dead, but in a swoon. Or, He may have simulated death to escape further torture on the cross. In the cool cavern He revived. The period of time was not great, for although you speak of His being three days and three nights in the grave, it was in reality just one day and two nights, from Friday evening till Sunday morning.

MORTAL—That He was not dead is unthinkable. But suppose that had been the case. He is buried in a swoon and revives in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea. He comes forth in that faint, wounded, broken condition. Do you think that such a body as that could have turned the mourning of the disciples into joy and sent them

forth to hope all things and suffer all things for the sake of Christ? That would be a miracle greater than the Resurrection itself. But even if such a thing could be imagined, we know from the records that it was not so, for the Jewish law was that none might hang on the cross on the Sabbath, and as the Sabbath was fast approaching, the soldiers brake the legs of the two thieves, but they brake not the legs of Jesus, for He was already dead. But one of the soldiers, just to amuse himself, took a spear and thrust it into the side of Jesus, and there came forth blood and water. The thrust of the spear of itself was sufficient to have ended His life.

CELESTIAL—But is it not possible that in that early morning the women who went to the tomb, came by mistake to an open grave, or that they saw in the morning mists the form of some stranger and took it to be the Lord?

MORTAL—That was possible, but that was not what happened. They might have made one initial mistake, but that one mistake cannot account for the ten appearances in different places and to different people. When men make such suggestions to account for the Resurrection, it is but an instance of what the apostle speaks of, "Professing themselves to be wise they become fools."

CELESTIAL—You read that Mary said to the

gardener, as she supposed, "They have taken away my Lord." Is it not possible that that actually happened? Someone came and stole the body.

MORTAL—Who?

CELESTIAL—Why not Pilate? He was distressed about sentencing a just man to death. His wife warned him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." His hands he washed in water as if to absolve his soul. I can imagine his anxiety, how he wondered if this was the Christ, and if He would really rise from the dead, until he could neither eat nor sleep, and to satisfy his mind he had the body removed so that he could see for himself that Christ was dead and remained so. Or the scribes and Pharisees might have done it. They said to Pilate when they sought a guard at the grave, "We remember that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." To guard against any fraud or deception, it was to their interest not only to place a watch, but even to take His body away. Or Joseph of Arimathea, in whose grave He was buried, or Mary, who loved Him, fearing violence to His body, might have carried it elsewhere.

MORTAL—All these things *might* have happened. But the evidence is to the contrary. Here we deal not with the possible but with the

probable. If I saw a ship lying at the foot of this street, I might say that the ship came from Liverpool, or Glasgow, or Hamburg, or Marseilles, or Naples, or Tokio. It could come from any one of those ports; there is enough water for it to sail in. But if I heard the men say they had sailed from Liverpool, and saw that the cargo was made up of English goods, I would be foolish to go in the face of that evidence and say the ship came from any of the other ports. The body of Jesus might have been stolen; the guard might have been asleep. But the very record that tells you the grave was empty tells you it was emptied by a Resurrection. It gives the fact and the explanation of the fact.

CELESTIAL—Your calling frequently takes you to the place of sepulture?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—And there, I suppose, you see the manifestation of sorrow?

MORTAL—Yes; alas, how often! There I see the "tender pathos of the here and the hereafter." With each new grave the grief is new.

CELESTIAL—Suppose the wife of a man whom you buried last week came to you this evening and said that her husband had risen from the grave, had appeared at intervals to her and spoken with her. What, sir, would you say to that woman?

MORTAL—I would say to her that she was mistaken. I would tell her as kindly as I could that the loss of sleep incident to the last sickness of her husband, her abstinence from food, and her brooding over the loss of her husband, had brought her into a physical and mental condition where she was subject to hallucinations. She only imagined that her husband had risen.

CELESTIAL—Very well; these friends of Jesus, particularly the women and His acquaintances who beheld afar off, felt the death of Jesus keenly. They remained by the corpse, they ran early to the tomb; two of them are spoken of as sitting by the grave on the night on which He was buried. Think of their grief, think of their abstinence from food. Why could they, too, not have been subject to a vision or hallucination of that sort?

CELESTIAL—They, too, might have been the victims of hallucination. That is not the question. The question is, *were* they the subjects of hallucination? Suppose you could account for the story of the women on that ground. You still have the other appearances extending over forty days, to men about whose sober self-possession there can be no question. Then, if the alleged Resurrection of Jesus was just an hallucination, visions seen by those who were distraught by grief, why did they come suddenly

to a termination at the end of forty days? It seems to me they ought to have continued to see such visions. If these visions were granted to their yearning and disturbed hearts, then surely the account of the appearances would have been different from what we possess. They ought to be the accounts of warm and intimate personal greetings. But, instead of that, their Lord appears with a strange dignity and reserve and aloofness. "Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father!" The nature of the appearances do not fit the theory of hallucination.

CELESTIAL—But if not hallucination caused by grief and excitement, then might we not explain this belief in a Resurrection by the wish and the thought of the disciples? They recalled His predictions that He would rise; they had taken Him to be the Messiah, and a Messiah ought not to be holden of death. They said He ought not to be dead and therefore He must be alive. Then, convinced as to that, it would be easy for stories to arise and embellish the fact of a Resurrection. But the only substantial fact is that they wanted Him to rise, and thought He ought to rise, and then leaped to the conclusion that He was alive. The stories were the result of the belief; the belief created the alleged facts, and not the facts the belief. What do you say to that?

MORTAL—I say that that is the common explanation of those who see that the disciples really believed that Christ rose, and yet do not want to accept the evidence that created that belief in his disciples. It is fancy and only fancy. Instead of being convinced by the prophecies that Christ would rise, when He did rise his disciples would scarcely believe it. Instead of coming to the conclusion that since He was the Messiah, He must be delivered from death, they took His death as evidence that He was not the Messiah. When they buried Him it was a farewell to hope. The chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death and crucified Him. That was the grim fact that had quenched their ray of hope. "But we hoped" (not hope, but hoped) "that it was He who should redeem Israel." All the evidence we have goes to show that, instead of a belief that He could not remain in the grave creating legends that He had risen, it was the Resurrection that created the belief that He was alive, and in the minds of men who had given up hope because they had seen Him crucified and buried.

CELESTIAL—But God is almighty. He could, if He so desired, create an objective vision of a risen Christ, and yet there be no actual resurrection of the physical body. And what difference does that make? The thing about

Christ is His spirit, His doctrines, His atoning death.

MORTAL—Again I say, God who raised Him up might have created, had He so desired, a vision that would have impressed the disciples. But instead of that, He chose to raise up His body out of the grave and manifest Him to the disciples. They might have believed in the teaching of Jesus; they might, let us imagine, have felt that His Person still existed; but the Resurrection of His body was the visible witness of God to His work and Person. It let them know by seeing that in Christ there was a power that is greater than death, and that convinced them as nothing else could have done that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer. Christian history springs from the Resurrection, and without a Resurrection, such a history is unthinkable.

CELESTIAL—But you speak of a body. What sort of a body was it?

MORTAL—The disciples recognized it to be the same, but not until it pleased Him to disclose Himself. It was only after they had seen Him for some time that they recognized Him. It was the identical body, and yet it was more than that. It was no longer subject to the laws of earthly existence. It came through the doors of the room where they prayed; it appeared and

vanished suddenly out of their sight. The wounds were there, but the body was in advance of the old body. Not until we have passed through that same mysterious change shall we be able to understand the nature of that body.

CELESTIAL—But suppose the body of Jesus had been cremated instead of laid in the tomb?

MORTAL—That would have made no difference. It was sown a natural body; whether it had been buried in the rocky cavern, or sunk deep in the sea, or reduced to a handful of sparkless ashes, that would have changed nothing about our belief in the Resurrection. It still would have been sown a natural body but raised a spiritual body—not a spirit, but a spiritual body. The one whom they saw was not a ghost, but one whose body had been raised up and glorified. It bore the image of the heavenly.

CELESTIAL—Did Christ appear to Pilate?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—Did He appear to the high priests?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—To any of the scribes, Sadducees, elders?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—To his friends?

MORTAL—Yes, first to Mary who loved Him much; then to Peter who had denied Him; then

to the other disciples, and to five hundred of the believers.

CELESTIAL—But why not to His foes? Certainly the witness of some of those who had Him put to death that He had risen would have counted mightily with the people. Then the fact that He is represented as appearing only to His friends lends support to the theory that it was a fraud and that they dared not show to the people the One whom they alleged to be the risen Jesus.

MORTAL—Your objection seems formidable at first, but upon reflection it amounts to nothing. The fact that Jesus appeared only to His friends must have been seized upon very early by those who desired to refute the doctrine, for we find Peter in the Book of Acts in one of his sermons saying that God raised up Christ the third day and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto "witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead." The risen Jesus was not manifested to all people, but to witnesses specially qualified to testify of Him. Only those who had had intimate relationships with Him were qualified to say of a surety that this man whom now they saw was the same Christ whom once they followed through the plains and fields of Judea and Galilee. That

He was shown to His friends only, to believers and not to others, is then not an evidence of a plot to deceive, but the plan and the purpose of God.

CELESTIAL—Your evidence for the Resurrection is strong. The proofs of it are, as Luke says in the introduction to his history, "many and infallible." But granted that, what difference does the Resurrection make? What does it establish?

MORTAL—It establishes everything. It makes all the difference between Christianity and no Christianity. It makes all the difference between the man who closes his Bible and terminates his faith with the words of the Gospel, "And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed," and the man whose faith is summed up in this, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." God asks me to believe great things about Christ, that He is the eternal Son of God, the Messiah, that He died for my sins, that He ever liveth to make intercession for me, that by Him I hope to live again, and He also gives a mighty fact to witness to all that He asks me to believe about Christ. That fact is the Resurrection. Christianity rests on that fact. You may tell me of men or churches which do not believe in

the Resurrection and present Christianity without it; but had there been no Resurrection there would be no Christianity over which men might disagree. The disciples went everywhere preaching "Christ and the Resurrection." When questioned, imprisoned, tortured, they ever appealed to the Resurrection. That fact was the proof of their teaching and the explanation of their zeal. The Resurrection created the Church; the risen Christ made Christianity. And even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him. If it be proved that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, then that tomb becomes the grave, not of a man, but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and the splendid enthusiasm it has inspired. If Christ did not rise, men have no proof of their religion, nor any religion worth proving. If He did not rise, our faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are of all men most miserable. If Christ did not rise, then are the dead not raised. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, and forever so!

> If this fail,
> The pillared firmament is rottenness
> And earth's base built on stubble.

But now hath Christ risen and become the first-fruits of them that slept!

VIII

Common Sense and the Church

THE CELESTIAL VISITOR, having heard the evidence for the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, returns to his own world and relates to his inquiring fellow immortals what he has learned concerning the Resurrection; how it is the rock upon which Christianity stands, and how the belief that Christ rose from the dead has created the Church. They have heard him refer to the Church on several occasions, and, as he is able to give only a meager description of the Church, he is despatched to earth again that he may have a true idea of what the relation of the Church is to that great plan of life and redemption which men call Christianity. He searches me out and questions me:

Celestial—I was three times in what you call your church. I saw your celebrations and witnessed your worship.

Mortal—Yes?

Celestial—Is this which you call the Church a world-wide institution? Are there churches wherever there are Christians?

Mortal—Yes; wherever there are Chris-

tians, there are churches. The Church is Catholic, which means world-wide.

CELESTIAL—Who founded the Church?

MORTAL—Christ.

CELESTIAL—But why was it necessary or expedient for Him to found a Church. He came into your world and took your form upon Him, taught men how to live, died for their sins on the Cross, and then rose again from the dead. He had completed the work of Redemption.

MORTAL—On the side of God He had, but not on the side of man.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean?

MORTAL—I mean that He had made reconciliation, or the means of it, between God and guilty, fallen man, and in the Resurrection of Himself from the dead He gave a mighty demonstration of the truth of His Person and His work. But God did not stop with that.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because my common sense would tell me that if God established so glorious and so costly a means of Redemption, He certainly would establish some means of applying that remedy to the world, of offering it to those for whom it was intended.

CELESTIAL—And what was that means?

MORTAL—The Church. Men sometimes perplex themselves with talking about a visible

and an invisible Church, and the true Church and the false Church, and refer to it in mystical and sometimes beautiful, but to the average man unmeaning, terms. But as a matter of reason and history, there is nothing strange or mystical about the Church. When Christ was on earth, He chose twelve men, called them from their nets, and their different callings, and told them to follow Him. During the three years of His public life most of His teachings were given to them. That was the plan God chose; to give the tidings of Christianity into the hands of men chosen by Christ and through them to the world. At the death of Christ this band of disciples seemed disrupted. One of them had betrayed His Master and in remorse had hanged himself. Another had denied that he had ever known Jesus. At the time of the Crucifixion they seemed to have forsaken Him and fled. But, as the first appearance of Christ on the earth had called them from their tasks and created their allegiance to Him, so now His appearance after the Resurrection re-created that band of disciples. Their sorrow was turned into joy, their fear into undaunted courage, their despair into glorious hope, and they went everywhere preaching Christ and the Resurrection; that is, they preached the Redemption of man through Christ and His death on the Cross, and the Resurrec-

tion as the infallible proof of that Gospel. Some doubted, but many believed; and daily there was added to them the number of those who came to believe on Jesus. The Church, this little band, at first did not realize that they were to be a distinct body, different from the Jews in whose religion they had been nurtured. But, by and by, the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to other parts of the world, and it was made clear to the original disciples that Christianity was not for a chosen few, that God was no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that worketh righteousness and doeth good was acceptable to Him, and to men everywhere the Gospel was to be preached. They suffered hardship and persecution, but they had the great advantage of having seen the Lord; they expected Him to return at any moment, and with the people to whom they preached their message the Gospel was something altogether new and strange. That, sir, was the beginning of the Church.

CELESTIAL—I understand you to mean, then, that the Church, in the simplest definition, is a company of men banded together who believe in Jesus Christ and believe in telling the world about Him?

MORTAL—Yes; that is all.

CELESTIAL—What building is yon?

MORTAL—Another church.

CELESTIAL—The same as your church?

MORTAL—No. That is a Roman Catholic church.

CELESTIAL—There are several churches?

MORTAL—No. The Church is one, one in purpose, one in belief about Jesus. But it has many branches or forms. Let us enter this church.

CELESTIAL—What are those pictures along the walls?

MORTAL—Those are the seven Stations of the Cross—that is, the pictures represent our Saviour in different positions when He was crucified. There He is carrying the Cross, falling beneath it; there He is being nailed to it; there being lifted up; there hanging dead.

CELESTIAL—This woman in this side chapel on her knees, what is she doing?

MORTAL—She is praying to Mary or one of the saints, either for herself, or for someone she loves, or for the world.

CELESTIAL—That man in the gorgeous dress?

MORTAL—He is a priest.

CELESTIAL—Why are the people all prostrating themselves? And what is it the priest is holding aloft?

MORTAL—That is the celebration of the Mass. He is elevating the Host.

CELESTIAL—What mean you?

MORTAL—He is holding up a consecrated wafer which stands for the body of Christ offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

CELESTIAL—Then they are celebrating the death of Christ as I saw it done in your church at the Communion?

MORTAL—Yes. The idea is the same, but the manner of celebrating is different.

CELESTIAL—I do not understand what he says.

MORTAL—He is speaking in Latin, not the language I use, nor that which you hear men use on our streets, but he is talking about Christ.

CELESTIAL—What church is this we are entering?

MORTAL—This is a Baptist church.

CELESTIAL—What are they doing there in the front of the church?

MORTAL—That is what they call immersion. They are baptizing a believer in Jesus by putting him under the water. In our church we use water, but we merely sprinkle it on the forehead.

CELESTIAL—What is water for?

MORTAL—It is a sign of the washing away of this man's sins through the blood of Christ. When Christ reappeared to His disciples He told them to preach the Gospel to every creature, and those who believed were to be baptized.

Baptism is the sacrament, the ceremonial, by which a man comes into the Church.

CELESTIAL—Then there are no members of churches who have not been baptized?

MORTAL—No. Different branches of the Church baptize in different ways, but all baptize.

CELESTIAL—You call it a sacrament. What other sacraments are there?

MORTAL—The church we were in last, the Roman, has seven. But all churches have at least two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

CELESTIAL—Why do they all have at least two?

MORTAL—Because they were both instituted by Christ, commanded by Him.

CELESTIAL—What church is this?

MORTAL—The Episcopal.

CELESTIAL—What is peculiar about it?

MORTAL—It teaches the same as all the churches, but in addition, it holds that only those are fully commissioned ministers and priests of Christianity who are in the line of what they call apostolic descent, that is, an ordination or laying on of hands which goes back from bishop to bishop until you come to one of the twelve apostles.

CELESTIAL—What in your church makes a fully commissioned minister?

MORTAL—The laying on of the hands of any

three presbyters or ministers who have already been ordained.

CELESTIAL—And in other churches?

MORTAL—Any man who is acceptable to the people of a congregation as showing wisdom, knowledge, and faith in Christ.

CELESTIAL—But you Presbyterians would not accept that?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—And the Episcopalians say you Presbyterian ministers are only laymen?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—And the Roman Catholic Church says no one is a fully commissioned priest who cannot trace his ordination back to Peter, and thus declares that all the priests of the Church of England are only laymen?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—What ugly building is this?

MORTAL—This is what they call a "tabernacle," though why the name of that beautiful, artistic, and symbolic structure the Jews built in the wilderness should ever have been given to this hideous barn is more than I have been able to understand.

CELESTIAL—There are more people here than I saw in the other churches.

MORTAL—Yes; vast throngs, thousands.

CELESTIAL—But I see nothing of that rever-

ence I noted in your churches, and this noisy music I do not like. Do you like it?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—What language is the speaker using?

MORTAL—Tabernacle language.

CELESTIAL—Do you like it?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—Then why did you bring me here?

MORTAL—I want you to listen to the speaker and hear what he has to say.

CELESTIAL—I have difficulty in understanding him, but from what I can catch he is speaking about Christianity and telling of Christ, His Incarnation, His death on the Cross, His Resurrection.

MORTAL—Yes. That is the point. Altogether different from what you have seen, yet telling the same story.

CELESTIAL—What beautiful building is this, with the five cupolas of divers colors, and all this colored glass on the walls?

MORTAL—This is the Greek Catholic church.

CELESTIAL—The people all stand in this church. The music is sung by men and without instruments. These little boxes on the walls before which these peasants are lighting candles, what are they?

MORTAL—The eikons, or the pictures of Christ or the Virgin Mother.

CELESTIAL—What language is the priest using?

MORTAL—The ancient Slavic.

CELESTIAL—Are there any more churches?

MORTAL—You have seen the great historic branches.

CELESTIAL—Yes; I have seen them and I am troubled. You tell me how your Master founded a little company of believers to witness for Him on the earth, and now I see scores of different churches, some of them holding no fellowship with one another. I am loath to believe that these churches with this gorgeous ritual, or those with a noisy vulgarity, or your stern and severe Presbyterian churches represent the Church that Christ founded. If I were a mortal and you asked me to confess Christ and seal the confession by coming into His Church, I should ask, "Which church? Roman, Greek Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, Presbyterian? Compose your differences and then I will come into the Church." What would you say, sir?

MORTAL—I would say that every real Christian regrets any division among the people of Christ which has resulted in bitterness or strife. But I would say also, what every man who uses his common sense would say, that if God was to

found a Church on earth among men it was only natural that a Church spreading to different nations and peoples should have taken on different forms. To prevent that God ought to have made men precisely the same. But He has not done so.

CELESTIAL—Then the great divisions of Christendom have followed natural lines?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Explain.

MORTAL—As the Church grew and multiplied, it felt the need of the preservation element of all society.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—Authority.

CELESTIAL—And who exercised authority.

MORTAL—The apostles at first, then men set apart to the office by the apostles. In great centers like Jerusalem and Rome and Antioch the leading bishops or presbyters naturally had great influence. Rome was the chief city of the world and it was inevitable that the bishop of the church there should be looked upon as a leader. At first the apostles spake the popular Hebrew, or Aramaic, and in most communities the universal tongue, the Greek, was used. But at Rome and in the west the language of the people, the Latin, came into use. But the churches in the east still used the Greek. Then,

when the seat of the Roman empire was transferred from Rome to Constantinople, the importance of the bishop of that church was increased, and thus there arose, by natural cleavage and by a difference in custom and language, a division between the church in the east and the church in the west. Those churches survive as the Greek Catholic and the Roman Catholic churches. The Greek Catholic church gave itself to subtle questions of theology, disputing about the Person of Christ and the nature of the Trinity, but the Roman Church was the church of the people and proclaimed the great truths of Redemption, not so much what God is as what God has done. As a result, it grew and prospered mightily. The very empire became Christian. But along with the good there was much that was evil and much that was a misinterpretation of Christ's teachings. These abuses grew and multiplied until, in the sixteenth century, there came what we call the Reformation, a great movement to purify the church from its evils and restore the simplicity of Christian teachings. That movement had two results. First, upon the Roman Church itself; obliged to fight for its right to live, it corrected many of the practical abuses which had aroused such indignation. But the difference between the old Church and the new Christian communities

which had sprung up was so marked that the Roman church ceased to recognize the new churches, and thus a second cleavage took place in the Church. People of different tastes and inheritance in Germany, Holland, England, France and Belgium naturally emphasized different things in Church worship and polity, and thus arose different sects among the Protestant churches. When the Church of England became worldly and spiritually sluggish, the Wesleyan movement came to awaken and purify her, and it was only the dullness of the older church that was responsible for the formation of a new body. I have tried to point out to you that God gave His truth, the heavenly treasure of Christian truth, into the keeping of an earthen vessel. It was to be preached by men, not angels, and being committed to a visible organization made up of believing but imperfect men, it is not strange that all these differences have arisen. After all, the points wherein they differ must not obscure the points in which they agree. They all agree as to God, the Redemption through the death and Resurrection of His Son, and even in forms they all agree as to worship and praise, and all of them have two common sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. You may go into a Greek Catholic, a Roman Cath-

olic, a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or even a Dunkard church, where they wash one another's feet after the manner of the New Testament—and you will hear of that one Lord, that one faith, and that one baptism. One summer I worshipped in the three great branches of the Christian Church. In St. Isaac's Cathedral in Leningrad, I stood in the midst of five thousand Russian peasants and heard the heavenly music of the great choir and saw the golden doors of the ikonostas swing open and the veil of their temple roll back to disclose the priest standing to minister at the altar amid a cloud of incense. Everything was strange and foreign, but I knew that Christ and His Cross were being exalted. A few weeks later I sat in the gallery of a historic Roman Catholic church in the Austrian Alps and listened to the priest address the local garrisons of soldiers, many of whom by this time have in death's darkness experienced their need of a Divine Saviour. The service was in Latin and the sermon in German; but I had not the least doubt they were talking about Christ and exalting His Cross. The next Sabbath in a church that bore no denominational title, but which was made up of American Christians resident in that foreign city, I administered the Communion after the manner of the Presbyterian Church. I differed from the

Greek priest and the Roman priest; and yet, as I gave the bread and wine to the people, I knew that it was the same Christ Whose death we celebrated. A few days after that, on a summer evening, I stood in the long nave of the English cathedral at Ely. It was the hour for the vesper service, and as I sat in that vast space, with the light of the setting sun streaming through the windows and lighting up the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles and the noble army of the martyrs, I could hear through the closed screen the reading of the lessons for the day and the sweet singing of the children. I have told you of the different forms of worship; but what impressed me in these churches was not the things in which they differed, but the Christ in Whom they all agreed. It seemed to me that I heard them all with one voice confess together, saying,

> We praise Thee, O God. We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting. The glorious company of the apostles praise Thee; the goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Thee; the noble army of the martyrs praise Thee. The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee, the Father of an infinite majesty, Thine adorable, true and only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ!

Other men may do as they please, but for myself, sir, I want to join in that chorus. I will sing in the churches of my fathers, for I am proud to be a Presbyterian. But had I been born into some other communion, I like to feel that I could sing His praises and hear of His mighty works in any other language and before any other altar. When, therefore, men say they will not be Christians because the Church is divided, they ignore the marvelous unity of the historic Church. They who refuse to confess Christ in any church on that ground, their objection is not to the Church, but to Christ. What they really take exception to is not the divisions of the Church, but Christianity itself.

CELESTIAL—But granting that the true unity of Christianity has never been broken, that although there are different branches they all abide in the one vine, has the life of the Church and the life of the members of the Church been such as to commend Christianity to the world? I hear you refer to the corruptions and the persecutions done in the name of Christianity.

MORTAL—All that would be strange indeed if the heavenly treasure had been put in a heavenly vessel. But instead of that Christianity was given for proclamation into the keeping of fallible men.

CELESTIAL—But did not your Christ say that

He would always be with His Church and guide it into the truth?

MORTAL—Yes; and He has kept His promise.

CELESTIAL—How? By the vices of the priesthood? The religious wars? The terrible Inquisition? The *autos-da-fé?* The savage quarrels and mutual excommunications?

MORTAL—All that, alas! is true, but that is not all. That same Church which has committed the enormities you mention, what else has it done? It has kept the torch of Christian truth burning from age to age. It has repeated from age to age the song that the angels sang about the manger-cradle of its Lord. It has celebrated from age to age the body and death of the Lord. It has, without a break in a single year for nineteen hundred years, on the first day of every week, celebrated the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. That same Church whose members have done evil and often denied their Lord has passed from age to age the sacred writings, those which foretold the advent of Christianity and those which relate the story of its foundation and its rise and spread. That same Church that kindled the martyr's faggots and applied the wrack and thumbscrew and that fought and strove for worldly pomp and power, has also from generation to generation told mankind of

Him who healed the wounds of the sick and dried the tears of the broken-hearted. It has repeated His incomparable tales of the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep and the Lost Son.

CELESTIAL—You mean, then, that the Church, with all her faults, has given Christianity to the world?

MORTAL—Yes. Christ founded the Church to be His witness to the world. That is what the Church has been in every age. That is what she is today.

CELESTIAL—But suppose, sir, a man tells you that the Church abounds in unworthy members, and for that reason he will not come into it. You do not claim that all these millions of professing Christians are all they ought to be?

MORTAL—No; far from it. Many of them, I fear, do not adorn, either in private or public life, the doctrine of our Lord. As a rule, I feel that the man who raises that question about the lives of those in the Church is himself insincere, and when he talks about hypocrites in the Church I feel like telling him there is always room for one more.

CELESTIAL—But suppose he is sincere in this objection and gives it as a reason, not as an excuse, for not coming into the Church?

MORTAL—Then I remind him, first of all,

that when people are received into the Church they never are asked to state they are impeccable in their lives, but on the contrary that they are weak, sinful beings, and as such seek the pardon and forgiveness of God. The Church is made up of men who have publicly confessed that they are sinners. Christ's standard is perfection. He makes no exceptions. He recognizes no peculiar circumstances as an excuse. No real Christian, then, pretends to be good, but confesses himself to be evil. Nevertheless, it would be strange if coming into the Church and listening to the precepts of Jesus and hearing the rehearsal of the mighty acts of Redemption should teach men to do wrong. Common sense says that could not be so. The whole evidence is to the contrary. Christian fellowship produces the fruits of Christian life. But the Christian life is a most difficult undertaking. We attempt to follow Christ.

> How very hard it is to be
> A Christian! Hard for you and me,
> Not the mere task of making real
> That duty up to its ideal,
> Effecting thus, complete and whole,
> A purpose of the human soul,
> For that is always hard to do;
> But hard, I mean, for me and you
> To realize it, more or less,
> With even the moderate success

Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the higher aims of life.

But wherever Christians not merely fail of the Christlike standard of morality, but completely deny it in their lives, it is in spite of, and not because of, the teaching of Christ as repeated by His Church. They have not so learned Christ. He does not teach men to lie, steal, cheat, slander, and break the other commandments.

CELESTIAL—What you mean, then, is that the chief question is the morality and the teaching and example of Christ, and not that of His disciples?

MORTAL—Yes. If a man convict Christ of a fault or prove His Gospel to lead to wrongdoing, then let him stay out of the Church. But if he looks for those who are worthy of Christ and of His Church he will have no difficulty in finding them. He will find, too, that the Church is what Christ said it was to be, the "salt of the earth."

CELESTIAL—What did He mean by saying that?

MORTAL—He meant that as salt saves meat from putrefaction, so the Church saves the world from corruption.

CELESTIAL—Yes, but look at your world! That terrible war which you tell me was waged

across the seas! Rivers of blood, heaps of mangled bodies, hecatombs of broken hearts! Is that the way the Church has salted the earth?

MORTAL—No. That is in spite of, and not because of, the teachings of Christ.

CELESTIAL—But after so many centuries of the preaching of the Gospel of this Christ, do you not think we ought to have great and remarkable results?

MORTAL—We have those very results. No one would think that that war was a horrible thing were it not that Christianity has so softened the races and so changed men's ideas. If that war had been waged with all its terrors and brutalities and no one in all the world had thought it strange, or had wondered why it could have happened after Christianity had been in the world for so long, then it would be indeed an indictment of Christianity. But instead of that men were appalled. When the Roman armies overran the world, no one asked, "How is this slaughter possible after so many centuries of Jupiter and Mars and the temples of Venus with their thousands of prostitutes?" But Christianity does make men ask questions and wonder. That, sir, is its glory. It has a spiritual mission and it has fulfilled that mission. It has kept ever burning the fires of faith, hope, purity, and brotherly love on the altars of hu-

manity. In that war, the only office that no one condemned and that all admired was that performed by those who went forth upon their errand of mercy and compassion with the emblem of Christianity upon their arms.

CELESTIAL—What building is that where those men are going?

MORTAL—That is a lodge.

CELESTIAL—What do they do there?

MORTAL—They meet for social intercourse and fellowship, and they have some sort of ritual and service they go through, conducted by officers appointed to that duty.

CELESTIAL—A sort of church, then? I suppose the men who go there have no need of going to the church?

MORTAL—I fear a great number of them think so. But they are mistaken. There is no substitute for the Church. There is no duty man can perform toward his fellow man or his Maker which takes the place of his duty to be done through the Church. The Church stands alone. There is nothing with which it may be compared. There is fellowship in the Church and ordered service and ritual in the Church, but it does not exist for that. It exists as a body of men set apart to witness to the truth of Christianity. He who believes in Christ believes in the Church, for He founded the Church. God

commands men everywhere to repent. In regard to that command the Church has a two-fold purpose. First, to repeat that command to the world, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel; and second, to be a place where men who have repented and believed may signify it to the world and find the company of others who believe in Christ. That being its purpose, it is plain that there is only one such institution. There is only One Name given under heaven whereby men must be saved, and just one institution upon earth which makes as its sole condition of admission repentance for sin and faith in Christ, and that institution is the Church. For a man to say that his being a member of this society, or going to that lodge, takes the place of his Church obligation would be like saying that sleeping takes the place of eating in the support of the physical body.

CELESTIAL—Are all the good men and good women in the Church?

MORTAL—No.

CELESTIAL—And if a man lives a good, moral, decent life, pays his debts, is kind to his family, is sober and industrious, considerate of the poor, interested in all good works and a lover of his nation, I take it that he is exempted from the claims of the Church.

MORTAL—That is a very common, but very

false, idea about the Church. If that is true, Christianity is a religion for men who stand low in the estimate of mankind. It is indeed a religion for such men; its first fruit was the dying thief who turned to Christ on the Cross and asked to be remembered by Him when He came into His kingdom. But it is not for such alone. The first convert from the world outside Israel was the centurion Cornelius, who was a devout man, his prayer and his alms going up for a memorial before God, just and honorable, well spoken of before the Jews. But to him was Peter sent to tell the story of the Cross and of repentance unto life and faith in Jesus Christ. The Author of Christianity does not heed those petty distinctions which men establish among themselves. Christianity is a religion for sinners, for no one else. If man is not a sinner, let him disregard the claims of the Church. But if all had not sinned, Christ had not died for all. There is no man too good for the Church, for the Cross condemns all that it may save all. And the men whose lives have been on the highest moral plane, men like Paul who lived so as to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man, have yet been the very ones who felt most deeply their need of a Redeemer, and when they looked upon Christ exclaimed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

IX

Common Sense and the Bible

DR. P. T. FORSYTH, a great defender of of the faith, has said, "There is no more difficult position today, nor one which evokes less sympathy, than that of the minister who has to stand between the world of modern knowledge on the one hand, and the world of traditional religion on the other, and mediates between them." One feels the appositeness of that remark when one takes up this subject of the Bible. At the one extreme is the man who hates the whole book as an ally of Christianity and will not even allow its literary supremacy. Then, there are those who take the Bible as eminent, even preëminent religious literature, voicing the deepest experiences of the soul of man, and the best guide that he has in this world of shadows and uncertainty. And last of all come those who believe that it contains the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life. There are questions about the Bible on which common sense, the ordinary judgment of the ordinary man, can say very little. If an uneducated man were to tell you what his common

sense had to say about the Hittites, for instance, you might be justified in telling him that his common sense was only nonsense. These are questions for scholars to decide. All that common sense can do is to pass on the evidence. But outside of these details of text and criticism, common sense has a great field in which it can gather its judgments.

Our guest, having returned to the celestial regions and related to his fellow immortals the history of the Christian Church, how it is the Divine agency for proclaiming Christianity to mankind, is asked by what means that Church has kept, through all the centuries, the truth of Christianity which it now presents to men, and how it is that so many different churches scattered over all the world yet agree in their presentation of the great truths of the Christian religion. He is at a loss for an explanation and is therefore again despatched to our earth. He attends a service in the church and at the conclusion comes to me and says:

CELESTIAL—What book is that which rests on your pulpit and from which you read and then asked the blessing of God upon the reading?

MORTAL—The Bible.

CELESTIAL—What is the Bible?

MORTAL—It means literally "the books,"

and it is perhaps unfortunate that it was ever spoken of "the book" instead of "the books."

CELESTIAL—Who wrote it?

MORTAL—The sixty-six books were written by many different men. Some were highly educated, some ignorant and unlettered.

CELESTIAL—When were these books written?

MORTAL—The oldest of them, centuries before the Christian era; the latest of them, the Gospel of John, over eighteen hundred years ago.

CELESTIAL—But how did they come to be gathered together in this way and spoken of as one book?

MORTAL—The part of the Bible we call the Old Testament had its beginning when the tables of stone on which the ten commandments had been graven, were deposited in the ark of the tabernacle. To this was added the book of the law written by Moses. Joshua added what he wrote. Samuel wrote a history of the Kingdom and laid it before the Lord. Thus slowly the Old Testament grew till the last books were added in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. These sacred writings were revered by the people and regarded as binding in authority. When the Church was established, this was the only Bible the people possessed. Christianity is a life rather than a book, and among all the commands

of Jesus, we find none telling His disciples to write the story of His life. Yet, as the years went by, a faithful record of what Jesus said and did became desirable. Luke, for example, commencing his history of the life of Jesus, says, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, O most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

CELESTIAL—Then, the reason for this book being written was that men might know the certainty of those things concerning Christianity about which they have been told?

MORTAL—It was.

CELESTIAL—Tell me more about the making of the Bible.

MORTAL—The apostle Paul after founding one church would go to another. Anxious to have these churches instructed in the faith and loyal to Christ, he would write a letter to be read when they met together. The earliest of these letters, and therefore the oldest of the

books of the New Testament, was the letter written to the church at Thessalonica. You see how they would treasure such a letter. Another church, like Corinth, would have another letter. And thus it was that anything the apostles themselves had written, or what had been sanctioned by the apostles, came to comprise the New Testament. The Christians began to value the writings of Paul just as highly as the Jews had valued the writings of the Old Testament. It was a long time before any one church had all the books that we now possess, and although the books themselves were probably written all within the first century, it was not until the end of the fourth century that we find the collection that we now have, accepted by all the churches.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean by Old Testament and New Testament?

MORTAL—That is the way the word "Covenant" has been translated. The Hebrew Scriptures were written under the old dispensation, or the Covenant of Works; The New under the new, or the Covenant of Grace in Christ Jesus.

CELESTIAL—But why have no books been added to the Bible since the twenty-seven of the New Testament were written in the first century.

MORTAL—Many books have been written,

letters, sermons, poems, dealing with Christian truth and history, but the Church has never recognized them as having authority.

CELESTIAL—What constitutes authority in the New Testament?

MORTAL—That they were written by apostles or by those sanctioned by the apostles.

CELESTIAL—What apostles?

MORTAL—Any of the original twelve or the apostle Paul, called to be an apostle after the Resurrection of Jesus.

CELESTIAL—But suppose a letter were discovered today and the evidence showed conclusively that it had been written by Paul. What then? Would you add it to your Bible?

MORTAL—Yes. There was a letter written to Corinth by Paul. We have no trace of it. If it appeared, we should give it the same authority as the two letters to that church now in our New Testament.

CELESTIAL—Do you think that such a letter will ever be discovered, or any other divinely inspired writing, and thus the contents of the Bible be augmented?

MORTAL—No; it is inconceivable that after the lapse of so many centuries any document could now come forward bearing upon it an evidence of apostolic origin sufficient to entitle it to a place in the New Testament. The Bible

as it now stands, nothing taken from it and nothing added to it, is our only rule of faith and practice.

CELESTIAL—But why do you give this authority to the letters and histories written by the apostles?

MORTAL—Because they were under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. They were inspired.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—What they wrote was the result of their own mental and spiritual and physical effort, yet that effort was so directed by God that whatever they wrote was truth—adequate for man's instruction.

CELESTIAL—This book on your desk, is it inspired?

MORTAL—No. There is no reason why it should be. It deals with the history of this country. That is important, but not nearly so important as is the history of Jesus Christ and the early Church.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because the latter deals with the questions of a man's nature, his happiness, his salvation.

CELESTIAL—Then, if this doctrine of inspiration has been claimed, it is claimed only for literature dealing with man's life and destiny?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Then it has been by means of these books and letters in the New Testament that Christianity has been given to the world and handed down from age to age?

MORTAL—It would be more correct to say that Christ founded a Church to do that, and that to help the Church spread Christianity and retain its knowledge among men, God gave the Church the New Testament.

CELESTIAL—I am not correct, then, when I say that Christianity depends upon the Bible?

MORTAL—No; Christianity does not depend upon the Bible. Christianity is a revelation of the will and mercy of God in Christ. The Bible is only the record of that will and revelation. The Bible is not Christianity, but the record of how Christianity was established, and an explanation of what Christian truth is. At first the Christians had no Bible at all; they got the Word and the Gospel from the apostles and their followers themselves. They had no written records, and yet they were real Christians. I believe the Bible to be inspired; but even were it not inspired, it would not affect the truth of Christianity any more than the story of the settlement of this country changes the facts of the settlement.

CELESTIAL—So, if it should be shown that

if the Bible is not inspired as you have thought it to be, your Christianity would not be destroyed?

MORTAL—The evidence for it would seem to be impaired; but whatever is true in Christianity in no way depends upon what has been written or spoken about it. I am not saved because John or Peter or Paul were inspired, but by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CELESTIAL—The importance of the Bible, then, is only that of a record and a teacher?

MORTAL—Yes; but it has pleased God to make that record and that teacher the means of my coming to know of Christianity. I believe that the Bible is inspired for the end that God had in view, that it should tell men of God and warn them of sin, and then announce to them redemption through Jesus Christ.

CELESTIAL—All churches, then, take the Bible to be the infallible rule of Christian faith?

MORTAL—Yes, no church pretends to stand upon any other ground than the Bible, though interpretations may differ.

CELESTIAL—Then you hold that if men want to know what Christianity is, they must go not to the Roman Church or the Presbyterian, but to the Bible, the New Testament?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—You have just said that the

Church has been fallible, and not infallible, as she has claimed. Suppose now it should be shown that the rule of faith to which you subscribe, the Bible, is fallible. What then?

MORTAL—Then I do not see how we could be certain at all about what Christianity is. But I believe that the Bible by the will of God has been so inspired, and so gives the truth of Christianity, that it is infallible. The Word of God as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify Him and enjoy Him.

CELESTIAL—Will you let me take your Bible and read it?

MORTAL—With pleasure. It cannot mean the same to you, since you are not a man and a sinner, and the Bible is a copy of God's message for sinners. Nevertheless, I shall be interested in hearing what your impressions are when you have read it through. Handle it carefully, for better hands than mine have lifted this Bible. A better mind than mine has meditated upon its truths. Turn the pages reverently, for the fingers that once turned them are dust, and the name that you see written in the front is a name that is now written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

(He returns after a week's absence)

MORTAL—Have you read the Bible?

CELESTIAL—I have. From Genesis to Revelation.

MORTAL—What do you think of it?

CELESTIAL—It is a wonderful book. What music of psalms, what quaint old tales, what graphic descriptions of battles and sieges, what wise maxims and proverbs, what eloquent speeches and prophecies; and in the Christian volume, how moving a history of the One who came to redeem you, His birth in the manger, His death on the Cross, His resurrection and ascension, and after that, the story of the spread of the Gospel by the preaching of Paul and Peter and John and the other apostles! I do not wonder that it has been revered and that you read it in your churches and in your homes. But I cannot agree with you that it is an infallible rule of faith.

MORTAL—For what reason?

CELESTIAL—Because I find in it, first, things that are not true; second, contradictions, and discrepancies between different accounts; third, things that are objectionable in their teaching, leading to false thoughts of God and wrong dealings between man and man.

MORTAL—What things do you find there that are not true?

CELESTIAL—A great many; mistakes in astronomy, geology, biology, history, geography.

MORTAL—For instance?

CELESTIAL—Your Bible commences by saying that God made the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, in the space of six days. But you told me when we were in the University and the Museum that this earth was thousands upon thousands of years in the making, and that you could trace the successive stages of the earth's formation. Why then do you tell me a book is infallible that says the earth was made in six days?

MORTAL—When I said the Bible was an infallible guide, I meant infallible as a spiritual guide.

CELESTIAL—But if wrong in astronomy or geology, it may be wrong as to theology, things spiritual, may it not?

MORTAL—But it is yet to be proven that it is wrong even in astronomy and geology. Great names in science have held that there is no discrepancy.

CELESTIAL—How do they reconcile the two teachings?

MORTAL—Some distinguish between truth and fact.

CELESTIAL—How?

MORTAL—They say it may not be a fact that God made the earth in six days, or that man was created out of the dust of the earth; but it is a

great spiritual truth that God is the Creator of the world and of all that is therein. Again, it may not be a fact that a serpent really talked to the woman and tempted her, but it is a great moral truth that man is subject to temptation as subtle and insinuating as the serpent is reputed to have been. Again, there may not have been real flaming swords at the gate of the Garden of Eden; but it is a truth that we lose the garden of our happiness by sin, and that remorse follows man wherever he goes.

CELESTIAL—What you are getting at is that the great fundamental truths about man's life are set forth in the early pages of Genesis with amazing exactness and power.

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Does this solution of the difficulties of the Bible in these early pages, making a distinction between fact and truth, satisfy you?

MORTAL—It does not.

CELESTIAL—Why not?

MORTAL—Because if the facts related are not facts, this inaccuracy would seem to invalidate the doctrines, the truths, taught. Moreover, if God could reveal to man the truth about his origin and his nature and his destiny, I do not see why he should have chosen to reveal those truths on a background of gross and preposterous error.

CELESTIAL—If it were proven, then, that the Bible is wrong about the creation of man, and wrong about the origin of the race, and of language, and the spread of man on the earth, and other alleged historical facts, would this shake your faith in the Bible?

MORTAL—It certainly would. A Bible full of mistakes would be a different book from that which I follow and trust. I know that there are some who claim that they can get great spiritual food and inspiration and hope from the Bible, can rely on it for the way of salvation, and yet reject a large proportion of it as inaccurate and incredible.

CELESTIAL—You cannot do that?

MORTAL—I cannot. My common sense tells me that a book which makes absurd statements as to the earth and man and the history of man is a less valuable book than the one which makes no mistakes.

CELESTIAL—Is there any other reason why you cannot take this easy way of getting rid of the difficulties of the Bible, that is, by distinguishing fact and truth?

MORTAL—Yes; men might treat the history of the Gospels in the same way. In fact, they are beginning to do so now. They tell us that the account of the Virgin Birth of our Lord is only a fable, but that it expresses a beautiful

truth of the real humanity and the real divinity of our Lord. All the Crucifixion teaches is the lesson of obedience and self-sacrifice. And as for the actual bodily resurrection of Christ, that they tell us is altogether incredible; but the story of the resurrection does teach the continuing life of Christ. Thus all the facts would disappear from the Bible, and in time the great hope of redemption and life eternal, for that hope is founded on certain historic acts and facts, related in the New Testament.

CELESTIAL—But you are a man of education and of meditation, and you must have been troubled about certain things in the Bible, particularly those early statements about the creation of the earth and the creation and the fall of man?

MORTAL—I have indeed been troubled, and often have I pondered the subject.

CELESTIAL—But if you reject the popular solution, that is, taking what you feel to be truth, but discarding the alleged facts, then what is your own solution?

MORTAL—In answer to that let me say first, that I am not sure that God intends that there should be no difficulties in the Bible for our finite minds. Who knows but the facing of these very difficulties and our often inability to solve them may be a part of our probation on

earth? God gives us sufficient evidence, sufficient for our faith, but He does not overwhelm the senses with evidence. In the second place, my feeling has always been that both as to fact and to truth we have only touched the outermost fringe of the great revelation which lies in those early chapters of Genesis. I think that neither the scientist nor the theologian ought to talk as if he saw clearly all that is said in those sublime and mysterious pages. It may seem, on the surface, that there is a discrepancy between the facts of the Bible and the ascertained facts of experimental knowledge. But this may be only a surface discrepancy. Science has yet much to learn about those great utterances of the first pages of the Bible. The world had just one Maker, and He made the heavens and the earth in just one way. When the final history is made clear, I believe that what God has said in the Bible will be in perfect accord with what He has said in the stars, the rocks, and the plants and in the bodies of men and animals. Indeed, the striking thing to me is not the few instances of apparent discrepancy, but, as to the great steps, the marvelous accord between the account of creation in the Bible and the most approved findings of experimental science. So true is this, that the head of one of our most learned scientific societies, the British Association, has

said, "It would not be easy, even now, to construct a statement of the development of the world in popular terms so concise and so accurate."

CELESTIAL—But what about the discrepancies and contradictions in the text of the Bible, and the inaccuracies as to time and place?

MORTAL—For instance?

CELESTIAL—I found in one historical book, Kings, the accounts of battles where the number of the slain was given at so many thousands, then in the other book, Chronicles, a different figure is given.

MORTAL—Probably an error in transcription. If we had the original autographs, I do not think we should find any discrepancy. But even if we did, I cannot make my regard for the Bible rest on whether ten thousand or a hundred thousand were slain. The whole matter is irrelevant. What other discrepancy?

CELESTIAL—In the New Testament, I found some. Matthew says the buying of the potter's field by the priests with the money which Judas had brought back was a fulfilment of the prophecy spoken by Jeremiah. But it was a prophecy of Zechariah, and not Jeremiah. Then, going further into that account of Judas, Matthew says that Judas came back and flung down the money and went and hanged himself, and the

chief priests took the money, the blood price of Jesus, and purchased a field to bury strangers in; and for that reason it was called the field of blood. But Luke makes Peter say in the Acts that Judas took the money and with it bought a field, and in that field he met his death, and for that reason, it was called Aceldama, field of blood. Now who purchased that field, Judas or the priests? And why was it called the field of blood? Because it was purchased with the pieces of silver, or because Judas died there?

MORTAL—I could give you the answers and explanations which have been made. They might satisfy you or they might not. It depends largely upon the kind of way you look at such things. They say that Peter, when he said that Judas purchased the field, meant only that it was purchased with the money of Judas. To me, I confess, that seems to evade the difficulty. I feel that this apparent disharmony is not to be lightly dismissed. There may be a harmony which lies beyond our vision. But I wish you to understand, sir, that should you prove conclusively that Matthew and Luke differ as to the history of Judas and that field of blood, you do not shake my faith in the Bible as my guide in Christian truth. Not the end of Judas, but the death of Christ, that is the main thing. If Matthew said Jeremiah instead of Zechariah,

I'm not troubled in the least. You have instanced what seem to be inaccuracies and anachronisms. But open your eyes to the wonderful accuracy of the Bible. The New Testament deals with a period of history which is confessedly one of the most difficult to write about, and that because of the shifts and changes in the government of that day. Of thirty names mentioned in The Acts, all but two, Barnabas and Theudas, are found in the writings of contemporaries. Thirty-six local towns are mentioned, and nearly all of them identified. There are in the Bible about fifty names of countries and nations, and all verified in time. The Bible speaks of the Hittites as a great nation, "From the wilderness even unto the river Euphrates." There being no mention outside of the Bible of such a people, scholars said the Hittites were a myth of the Old Testament. Today the ruins of that nation show them to have been hardly a less people than the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and the scholars pore over their hieroglyphics. The more that we learn of the past, the more records unearthed, the more wonderful appears the accuracy of the Bible.

CELESTIAL—But, suppose there are no discrepancies, and no errors as to dates, names, races, nations. A more serious consideration is the moral. There are things in the Bible

which, if printed in any other book today, would be excluded from the mails as obscene. How do you claim inspiration for such a book? Or if inspired, that its knowledge will do the reader good?

MORTAL—The passages to which you refer are perhaps three or four in number, and all in the Old Testament. In the recital of man's sin, the Bible veils nothing. It does relate the bare and hideous facts of sin and passion, but never, sir, in a way to make men think lightly of sin, or in a way to incite sin in others; always in a way that warns men of the consequences of wrongdoing and fills them with awe at the judgments of God.

CELESTIAL—But aside from the relation of those personal acts of vice, it records terrible transactions which seem to have the sanction of God.

MORTAL—What?

CELESTIAL—The wholesale slaughter of their enemies, the Canaanites. It is at God's command that these people are exterminated. "Thus saith the Lord!" What would you think of a nation which put all its prisoners to the sword?

MORTAL—I should say it was damnable, monstrous. No adjective would be too strong to describe such conduct.

CELESTIAL—But still you read these chapters in Joshua and elsewhere in the Old Testament, and then ask God to bless the reading?

MORTAL—Yes. God does terrible things in righteousness. God is back of all the laws that are at work among men, and those laws we see constantly, and without pity, destroying men and nations. That God should have destroyed these Canaanites in order to keep the Israelites uncontaminated and thus save alive the hope of mankind does not trouble me. The only difficulty is about His using the Hebrews themselves to carry out that extermination. To us it would be a terrible and a brutalizing thing; to them it was not. We must not attribute to a Hebrew under Joshua the sentiments of a man who enjoys centuries of Christian training.

CELESTIAL—You do not get around these passages, then, by saying as so many do, that these Jews had for a tribal God Jehovah, and that they invoked His aid in their battles and only *thought* that He commanded them to exterminate their foes?

MORTAL—No. There are dark lines in God's face. To judge and destroy the corrupt Canaanites, He used the Jews just as He had used the fire and the volcano to destroy the cities of the plain. I read these records and learn to stand in awe and sin not.

CELESTIAL—But aside from these terrible transactions, there are sustained sentiments which teach a false morality.

MORTAL—Where?

CELESTIAL—In the Psalms. They ask God to wreak vengeance on the singer's enemies. One of the most beautiful of the Psalms of Hebrew patriotism ends with this savage imprecation, where the singer, speaking of Babylon, says, "Happy is he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against a stone." The Psalms teem with curses upon one's enemies. But I understand your Christ taught you to love your enemies and pray for them that despitefully use you, and that on the cross He Himself said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?

MORTAL—Yes; that is what He taught and what He said. And any theory of inspiration must recognize that there is a difference between the spirit of the Psalmist and the spirit of the Saviour.

CELESTIAL—You do not believe, then, that the Holy Spirit inspired men to make those savage prayers for vengeance?

MORTAL—No; not if they are personal prayers against personal foes. If the Psalmist means that these enemies represent the hosts of darkness and rebellion against God, then it is

different, for utter extermination is what awaits all that is opposed to God's will. But if the Psalmist is seeking this fearful vengeance on his foes, common sense tells me that I must take the morality of the Psalms to be far below that of the Gospels. No theory of inspiration must make us violate the spirit of Jesus. The value of the Scriptures is that they testify of Christ. Jesus said, "These are they which testify of me." Such imprecatory prayers do not testify of Him. Now that you fixed your attention on the alleged misstatements, contradictions, discrepancies, and false teachings of the Bible, look elsewhere. A buzzard, flying over the earth, sees only the carrion, not the green meadows, the pleasant hillsides, and the lakes and rivers. There is a spirit of Biblical criticism which hovers over the Word of God and sees only the mysterious accounts of the creation, and not their beauty, but their alleged discrepancy with science; only the stories of lust and incest that are related; the cruel wars and un-Christlike sentiments; the she-bears that tear the children, the story of Jonah and the whale; and never hears its rich music, its magnificent promulgation of the law of God, its precept upon precept and line upon line that lead to God and peace, its Divine accents of compassion, its gracious overtones of mercy and forgiveness, and its

blessed assurance of life which is to come. When you have found a better book than the Bible, then cease to revere it or think it inspired. But when you think of what the Bible has been to the race, how it has written their laws and created their hopes and aspirations; when you think of what the Bible has endured, how the "Word of God is tried"; how it has outlived the flames of the Roman persecutions and the Inquisition, how it has been the anvil that has broken every hammer lifted upon it; when you think how it has warned the reckless and sinning, how it has recalled the lost and abandoned, how it has been the chart by the study of which men have followed in the steps of the Man of Galilee, and how it has comforted the broken-hearted and put the pillow of its hope beneath the head of the dying, you cannot account for it in the way in which you account for other books. You are forced to admit that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Is there any need of the heart of man to which the Bible does not minister, any dark path where it does not cast its cheering light, any grim wall upon which it has not written the legend of its hope? It is not the Light, but it is the lamp that holds the Light. It is not the treasure, but the casket which holds the treasure. It is a sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well that we take

heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts. In that world to come, of which the Bible and the Bible alone bears witness, we hope to see God face to face. Faith will have been exchanged for vision. There will then be no need of Bible and guide. But I like to think that the children of God will be permitted to have some recollection of their earthly pilgrimage, and that among the joys and the felicities of the Kingdom of Heaven, not the least will be that of friends who knew each other here on earth and have recognized each other in immortal life, gathering together in the peace and safety of that Eternal City and reading together from that book upon whose words they once had meditated upon earth, and whose accents led them "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night was gone" and the bright morning of heaven had dawned upon them. Now we read the book by faith, looking forward, but seeing through the glass darkly; then we shall read the book looking backward, seeing face to face. Who knows but this Sabbath day, while in our homes and our churches, in our closets and by the side of the sick and the mourning and the dying, we have read the Word of God, how "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," how "He was wounded

for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity," how "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," or "Let not your heart be troubled," or "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him," or, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat"—who knows but the Redeemed in heaven, having found all these things to be true beyond the fondest imagination of the heart, repeat those same words, not as a prayer or a hope, but as a song of thanksgiving for their deliverance?

X

Common Sense and Prayer

IN Victor Hugo's powerful tale, *The Man Who Laughs,* there is a chapter entitled "The Highest Resource." If you have read the story, you will remember how the sailing vessel, whose company has abandoned the disfigured child on the shores of England, has been overtaken by a storm on its way across to France and is about to sink in the treacherous waters off the Channel Islands. As the doomed company gather on the deck, the doctor calls to them, "On your knees! Repentance is the bark that never sinks. You have lost your compass? You are wrong! You still have prayer." The waters have now risen to the deck and at the words, "Let us pray," they kneel in the darkness and repeat each in their own tongue, the doctor in Latin, the Provençal in French, the Irishwoman in Gaelic, the petitions of our Lord's Prayer. By the time they have reached the last petition, the ship sinks and the remorseless waves bury them until the sea gives up its dead and the grave hers.

Yes, prayer is the last and the highest resource of the soul. The Greek word for man is

"anthropos" and has been traced to a word which means to look up. In contrast with the brutes, man is the one who looks up to God. Man prays because he is made in the image of God. Prayer is the expression of man in his lowest state of ignorance and in his highest state of knowledge. The child whose lips can scarcely frame to pronounce its Maker's name is taught to pray, and we think it a beautiful and natural thing for the child to do. The full-grown man, ripened by the experience of life, and disciplined by the trials of life, begins and ends his days with prayer. There are a good many of the practices of childhood that we abandon when we become men—"when I was a child, I spake as a child; I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things"—but prayer, that we never put away, any more than we put away eating or drinking or sleeping.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on High.

Our celestial guest, having returned again to his own habitations, tells to his fellow immortals the story of the Bible, how it grew from book to book and age to age, and how it is the guide and the comfort of the Church and the Christian. He has related how the Bible is read and

commented upon in the homes of Christians and in the churches where they worship. Asked to tell more of their forms of worship, he says that they not only read the Word of God and speak about God, but they talk to God. They are amazed that men should be able to carry on a conversation with the pure and ineffable Being whom they have never seen, and to inquire further into this strange practice, our guest is again sent to the earth. He comes once more to the church and is present at a service. After the service, he addresses me thus:

CELESTIAL—I understand your reading the Bible, and your speaking about your God and His Word and His plan of Redemption. But what was the meaning of that singing? It was a fine harmony, but what did it mean? And there was a time when you closed your eyes and seemed to be speaking to One who you could not see—what does all this mean?

MORTAL—That part of our service was worship. The service consists of two parts, instruction and worship. Worship has two forms, singing and praying; but the hymns we sung were really prayers, only uttered in a different way.

CELESTIAL—What is prayer?

MORTAL—Prayer is man talking with God.

CELESTIAL—And God hears you?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Then God is a person just like man?

MORTAL—He is a person, but He is the perfect Person, man the imperfect person. But if God were not a person, man could not talk with him and there could be no such things as prayer.

CELESTIAL—Why did you close your eyes when you were praying? Did you see God and become frightened?

MORTAL—No; no man hath at any time seen God. I closed my eyes as an act of reverence and respect. When I talk with a woman I remove my hat; when I talk with God I close my eyes. We are told that the cherubim and seraphim, celestial beings about whom you may know much more than I do, veiled their faces before Him. Men have always believed in God, and yet have always felt that there is a great difference between God and man. Man is sinful; God is holy. So from time immemorial men have closed their eyes when addressing the Deity.

CELESTIAL—I notice, too, that you use a different form of speech when you are praying. You say "Thou" for "you" and "art" for "are"?

MORTAL—Yes; men have always thought it a mark of reverence to speak to God in a different form of language than that which they use

in ordinary conversation. It helps us, too, to center our thoughts upon God.

CELESTIAL—In the beginning of your prayer, you spoke of God as infinite, eternal, unchangeable and you prayed that His name might be hallowed.

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Does God not know that He is all that you said Him to be?

MORTAL—He does.

CELESTIAL—Why then did you tell Him?

MORTAL—Because it was in my heart to tell Him. Not because He does not know His own infinite perfections, but because He has taken the pains to reveal Himself to me, in Nature, in conscience, in His Word—above all, in His Eternal Son, and I want Him to know that I have given heed to that which He has taught me of Himself. I have often found, too, that when I think about the glorious attributes of God, I realize the more my own imperfections and I am filled with a desire to be better. A parent likes to have his child tell him how he loves him, and God is my Father.

CELESTIAL—Then the first part of every prayer should be adoration?

MORTAL—Yes; the thought of adoration should be in the mind of the one who prays, whether he puts it into words or not.

CELESTIAL—Then you thanked God for life, raiment, and your daily bread, and for all that you enjoy in life.

MORTAL—Yes. We come into His courts with thanksgiving and into His gates with praise. We are taught in the Bible to pray with thanksgiving.

CELESTIAL—But there is so much in your life that is hard and dark; your friends die and leave you; your hopes and ambitions are disappointed; your bodies are subject to pain and disease; and you must earn your bread with the sweat of your brow. Isn't that a strange reason for giving thanks?

MORTAL—It may seem strange to you, sir. It seems strange to men in this world, too, who do not know Christ. But it is just one of those strange things which are the glory of the Christian religion. It tells us that this life is probation, and that thus all things are working together for our good. In everything we are to give thanks. God knows what is best for me, and to those who are the disciples of Christ, He is what Christ called Him, Father.

CELESTIAL—But is He not Father of all?

MORTAL—Yes; and He makes His sun to shine and His rains to fall on the just and the unjust. As one of our poets has said:

Father of all! In every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

But in special and gracious sense God is the Father of the Christian. He has ordained that through Christ men should be restored to their lost sonship.

CELESTIAL—Is that the reason why you always end your prayers by saying—"In the name of Jesus" or "For Christ's sake"?

MORTAL—Yes. Christ is the only way by which man can come unto God. He said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

CELESTIAL—But that Mohammedan we saw kneeling on this carpet? those heathens kneeling to their idols? those Jews in the synagogue praying to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Does God pay no heed to their prayers?

MORTAL—I do not know. I hope He does. But I am not God. All I know is that God told me to come to Him through Christ. I would feel it to be cultivated unbelief, blasphemy, did I pray to God save through the name of Christ. I confess to nothing of that common desire among men who have enjoyed the advantages of Christian revelation and education, to put myself down to the religious level of the pagan. If I am a real Christian, I will desire that all may

come to know the truth as it is in Jesus. But when I pray and when I speak, it must not be as though God had not sent Christ into the world to bring life and immortality to light.

CELESTIAL—There is, then, even among Christians a great deal of dreamy religious sentiment, and much prayer that is of fine wording, but which disregards entirely the revelation of God in Christ?

MORTAL—Yes; alas, a great deal of it.

CELESTIAL—I notice that your prayers generally end with a confession of sin.

MORTAL—That is because we ever need repentance. Christ died once for all. There can be no repetition of His sacrifice. But Christ taught men to pray for forgiveness. In His own great prayer, what we call the Lord's Prayer, He taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Some men think that they are not sinners. But probably God knows best. If any man says he has no sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him. But if we confess our sins, He is just and faithful to forgive us.

CELESTIAL—And that is all that is necessary? No mediating priest, no ritual of expiation?

MORTAL—No. The soul needs no priest, but Christ, the Great High Priest. Wherever man

lifts up his heart to God and says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight," there God meets with the soul to bless it and forgive it; and earth hath not so dear a spot as where the soul meets with God in prayer. Jacob named that place "Peniel," for, he said, "I have seen God face to face." The truth is that man is made in the image of God. He has sinned; he is fallen. But God hath set eternity in his heart, and that eternity that is in man yearns after the eternity that is in God. The deep calleth unto the deep. Man is like a creature in exile; he knows he is away from his true home and country and would fain return. Prayer is the name for that desire. It is the way back to God. As Augustine said in his oft-quoted prayer, "Thou hast made us, O God, for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee"! Or in the greater words, in the more beautiful figure of the inspired apostle, as he stood on Mars Hill by the altar raised to the Unknown God, "Whom ye ignorantly worship I declare unto you; God that made the world and all things therein, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, that they should seek the Lord if happily they might feel after Him and find Him, though he be not far from every one of us." Prayer is man feeling after God. Think of a blind man, or a man in the mists or

the dark, groping his way along, feeling uncertainly for an unknown which he believes must exist; there is prayer on the part of man before Christ came, heathen prayer. But Christ came to show man the Father. Think of a man speaking to God through Christ; there is Christian prayer.

CELESTIAL—Then prayer is man's birthright, and Christian prayer the privilege of Christianity?

MORTAL—It is; and the man who will not pray simply refuses to exercise his right as a man for whom Christ has died.

CELESTIAL—Must you always speak when you pray?

MORTAL—No.

> Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or unexpressed,
> The motion of a hidden fire,
> That trembles in the breast.

CELESTIAL—Must you always pray in public, as an assembly?

MORTAL—No; you can pray everywhere, in the secrecy of the closet, at the breakfast table, at the family altar, at our studies, at our work.

CELESTIAL—Why, then, pray together as you do in the church?

MORTAL—But Christ has promised a special

blessing on the prayers of His disciples when they meet together in His name.

CELESTIAL—I am impressed with the beauty and the helpfulness of prayer, at least, for the man who prays. But I confess I am puzzled about this exercise.

MORTAL—Why?

CELESTIAL—You believe that God is?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—And that He is good?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—And that He is able and willing to do far above all that you can ask or think?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—Then what is the necessity of prayer? If God is what you believe Him to be, it seems to me He would do what is best for you without being asked. If He is not all-good and all-powerful, then it would do no good to ask. In either case, your prayer seems to me a useless performance.

MORTAL—Your objection, in the first place, does not touch the most important truth about prayer, that it is man communing with God. It is the language used between the finite and the Infinite, and the only language. In that sense, prayer has nothing to do with the bestowing of gifts and blessings in the material sense. It is an office whereby God bestows Himself on man.

It is the child confiding in his father. As for the second part of the office of prayer, an offering up of our desires unto God, you might reason that a good God would give all that we need, and that without our asking; but the fact is that God has made man with the desire to ask and He has sanctioned that asking. He has said that men will never seek Him in vain. "Ask and ye shall receive." I have no doubt He could give light without the sun, but He has chosen to give light by means of the sun. He could grant me blessing without my asking, and He does every day, but He has also ordained that I should make known my requests to Him.

CELESTIAL—There is another thing that puzzles me in prayer.

MORTAL—What is that?

CELESTIAL—In your prayers and sermons I have heard you say, what upon reflection I see to be most logical and inevitable, that all things are foreordained of God. That must be so; if God is all-knowing, He must see what will happen to me today, and if He knows what will happen, He must decree and determine that it should happen.

MORTAL—What of it?

CELESTIAL—Why this: Suppose you pray that a certain friend who is sick should be

healed of his sickness. Tomorrow he is better; his fever leaves him. Now, if all things are ordained of God, God knew that tomorrow that man would recover. It was then certain. Your prayer had nothing to do with the change in the man. How could it? If it did, then life is uncertain, and God is not the absolute and omniscient ruler? What can you say to that?

MORTAL—I would say this, and only this, sir: There seems to be no slightest flaw in your logic, and the difficulty has often perplexed men who both pray and think. I know that many learned and pious treatises have been written on the subject; but frankly, my common sense tells me that these two truths, the sovereign will of God, foreknowing and therefore decreeing all that comes to pass, and the efficacy of man's prayer, have never been reconciled. I do not believe that in this state of existence they ever will be reconciled. But my common sense also tells me that both of these truths are taught in God's world and in God's Word. To man they appear inconsistent, but there must be a harmony between them, although the point of contact is beyond the vision of man. I believe that God's will is sovereign, and that there is no chance or happen—so in life, and yet I am not a fatalist: I do not sit down and fold my hands. I pray and I think. Common sense vindi-

cates both of those judgments, though neither common sense nor revealed sense affords any reconciliation.

CELESTIAL—I heard you pray for a man in your church who is dangerously ill.

MORTAL—Yes; I asked God to bless the means used for his recovery.

CELESTIAL—If you were sick, what would you do?

MORTAL—I would pray and I would call for the doctor.

CELESTIAL—But why the doctor? Why not just pray? You believe that God hears you and will do what is best for you if you ask Him.

MORTAL—God has given me a mind. He asks me to serve Him with my mind as well as with my strength and heart and soul. That mind tells me about disease and the means of checking it. I am, therefore, a prudent man when I call the doctor and a pious man when I pray. Hezekiah prayed and the prophet told him to lay a plaster of figs on the diseased organ. Men often go to one of the two extremes; some pray and never use means of recovery; some never pray and rely only on the doctor. In our day, I feel that the therapeutic value of prayer is greatly underestimated.

CELESTIAL—What do you think of those who rely on prayer and never call the doctor?

MORTAL—There are two classes of such persons, and I must be careful to distinguish between them. First of all, there are those who recognize that there is such a thing as disease and sickness and pain, and trust to prayer to heal them. I do not agree with them, for I feel that God has given man the agencies and the discoveries of medicine just as much as He has given him the office of prayer. But there is a second class of persons who scorn all means and rely on what they call faith. They seem to have no thought of religion save as a means of getting rid of sickness and pain, whereas nothing could be plainer from the New Testament and the history of God's people, than that pain and sickness are ofttimes the channel through which courses the tide of faith and religion. But they make health a religion. They always make me think of that verse in the Bible, "For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins."

CELESTIAL—But I am told they believe all the truth of Christianity, only in purer form.

MORTAL—Then they must be ignorant of Christianity. They deny the grandest and noblest thing in Christianity, not getting rid of life, but making life a training school for the soul. There was Paul: he had a thorn in his flesh. Some say it was the stone, some epilepsy,

some the maceration of Roman scourgings, some ophthalmia. Whatever is was, it was painful, distressing, humiliating. These people would tell Paul that there was nothing wrong with him. Just fix his thought on God and God's love, and all would be well. But Paul says he prayed and prayed hard, three times besought God to pluck that thorn. But the thorn remained in his flesh. Even the faith and prayer of Paul could not heal him, but instead of being healed, Paul got a blessing for the soul that has blessed and comforted thousands upon thousands of sufferers ever since he made his cry to God. "And He said unto me, Paul, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." That, sir, is Christianity, noble, glorious, God-begotten and soul inspiring. You take your choice between the two, a pseudo-Christianity in which, granted that it could be done, Paul is immediately cured, and jumps up in an assembly of Christian brethren and tells how he had this thorn in the flesh and never could get any help until he began to think along this new line and then the thorn disappeared; now he never knows that he had it—I say, you must take your choice between that sort of Christianity and a Christianity where this heroic apostle, scarred with the stripes and beaten with the rods, marred with stones, pinched with

the famine, bitten with the cold, burned with the sun, pierced through and through with the excruciating pain of the thorn, writes to his friends and to all Christians in ages to come, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." O Paul! strong and magnificent soul, best interpreter and exemplar of the glorious truths of Christianity, arise! Fearless and noble spirit, live again in our day and generation, for the Church hath need of thee!

CELESTIAL—What is that in your hand?

MORTAL—A postal card.

CELESTIAL—What is written on it?

MORTAL—It is what they call a "chain prayer." The anonymous writer says that it is a very ancient prayer. It promises a rich blessing to me if I copy the prayer and mail it to someone else; but if I neglect to do this I shall be cursed in time and in eternity.

CELESTIAL—Will you send it on?

MORTAL—No; I throw it in the waste basket. It is the work of a fool or an imbecile, or some ignorant person who was frightened when he received the prayer and did not dare to break the chain.

CELESTIAL—Are you not afraid of the curse?

MORTAL—No. Only sin can curse me. Only God can bless me.

CELESTIAL—What are these men doing?

MORTAL—Praying for rain.

CELESTIAL—What is rain?

MORTAL—The atmosphere is full of moisture, or vapor. When this vapor condenses, or is gathered together, the vapor changes to a liquid state, and that liquid falling on the earth we call rain.

CELESTIAL—Where did the moisture, the vapor, come from?

MORTAL—The vapor is the result of what we call evaporation, or the change of liquid into vapor. The water that is upon the earth changes into vapor in the atmosphere; then it changes again into rain and comes back to the earth.

CELESTIAL—Which is first, the water or the vapor?

MORTAL—I don't know.

CELESTIAL—Then your rainfall depends upon the amount of evaporation, and following that, the amount of condensation?

MORTAL—It would seem so.

CELESTIAL—Is not this utter folly, childish superstition, for these men, these farmers, to be praying for rain?

MORTAL—Why do you think it folly?

CELESTIAL—Because you have explained to me that the precipitation of rain depends upon a series of effects, each brought about by an anterior cause.

MORTAL—That, sir, is true. But, in the first place, prayer assumes that God is a Person. He is not the name for a procession of causes, but a Person beyond and above this natural world, and controlling all that takes place in it. Prayer not only assumes that, but is, I think, one of the chief evidences for such a God. When you deal with the facts evident in the natural world, you must take into the reckoning this fact that man has the instinct to pray to a Personal God.

CELESTIAL—I grant all that you say. God is a Person or nothing. But does it not appear from the study of Nature that it is God's plan to work through these series of causes and effects, although He superintends and initiates the whole?

MORTAL—It does.

CELESTIAL—Have you ever seen the normal process of Nature set aside by prayer?

MORTAL—I cannot say that I have. The uniformity of Nature seems to be one of the laws that God has written on the face of the heavens and the earth.

CELESTIAL—And yet you will not say that these men praying for rain are fools?

MORTAL—By no means!

CELESTIAL—But are you not inconsistent? If you believe in praying for rain, is it not because you forget what you have learned at school and college?

MORTAL—No; in the first place, prayer must be taken as an influence; it is a reality, and as such must be some kind of cause. We may not see how that kind of cause is fitted into the mechanism of such causes as evaporation and condensation, but that does not prove that it could not be so. Even man is able to make new arrangements and new combinations with the laws of the visible world so that he gets certain effects. The ship that flies through the air is the result of combinations and arrangements which defy the law of gravitation. If man can do that, who shall put a limit to the power of God? In the second place, in tracing back one event or effect to its anterior cause, man can go only a short distance. This trail of events is soon lost in the infinite mazes of the worlds that are beyond our ken. So when we lay down any hard and fast law about happening in Nature, about rainfall, about healing of sick bodies, we must remember that we deduce our theory from a very limited field of observation. One of our great souls, Chalmers, has expressed it, "Of these remoter causes man can say positively

nothing. Like the upper part of a chain, a few of whose closing links are all that is visible to us, they may be directly appended to the throne, and at all times subject to the instant pleasure of a prayer-hearing God. And it may be that by a responsive touch at the higher, and not the lower, part of the progression, that He answers our prayers. If the responsive touch be given at the lower part of the chain, then the answer to prayer is by miracle, or by a contravention to some of the known sequences of Nature. But if the responsive touch be given at a sufficiently higher part of the chain, then the answer is effectually made, but not by miracle, and without violence to any one succession of history or Nature which philosophy has ascertained—because the reaction to the prayer strikes at a place that is higher than the highest investigations of philosophy. It is not by a visible movement within the region of human observation, but by an invisible movement in the transcendental region above it, that the prayer is met and responded to. It is thus that, at one and the same time, we live under the care of a presiding God, and among the regularities of a harmonious universe.

CELESTIAL—You mean that the ultimate processes and causes and effects are beyond the range of the keenest observer, and that your

belief in prayer rests upon what you believe God to be, not upon that part of His dealing that you can trace in Nature?

MORTAL—Precisely. "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him! but the thunder of His power, who can understand?"

XI

Common Sense and the Judgment

OUR CELESTIAL GUEST, having learned from man what he believes about prayer and how he makes use of that means of grace, returns once more to his own abode and there describes for the immortals man's "golden altar where fumed the incense of prayer." He gives them a complete account of the establishment of Christianity, its rise and spread, the great foundation upon which it stands, the great institutions which it confirms, and the method of its world-wide worship. But they want to know if this is a permanent state of affairs. Is the Church to continue her mission indefinitely? Are new generations of men forever to follow upon the old and repeat past follies and hear the proclamation of the means devised for their redemption? In other words, is the present order everlasting, or is there reason to expect a change? Their ambassador has asked man nothing as to his belief on this subject, and again is despatched to earth to interrogate man—for whom he now has a feeling of friendship and sympathy—as to his belief concerning the future of man, the Church, the world. Once more he

attends this church, and after the service questions me as follows:

CELESTIAL—What was that you repeated at the beginning of the service?

MORTAL—The Apostles' Creed.

CELESTIAL—What is a creed?

MORTAL—It is the most unpopular thing in the world today, but altogether necessary. Creed comes from the Latin word "credo," I believe. A creed is therefore a statement of what a body of Christians believes.

CELESTIAL—How did such things arise?

MORTAL—In this way; even before the apostles were dead and gone, the doctrine of Christianity began to be corrupted, by some wilfully, by some ignorantly. Each new generation had its new heresy. We think that our age is supreme for grotesque and fantastic perversions of Christianity. But our day is as nothing when compared with the first centuries of Christian history. It seems to be the plan of God that man should be on trial concerning faith as well as concerning life, and so the Apostle to the Gentiles said that it was necessary that heresies should arise that the faith of the approved might be made manifest. To guard against the corruptions of Christian doctrine, men who knew the truth had to state and formulate it. Men have thought that the creeds

assume too much knowledge, whereas the true history of them is that they are remarkable for what they leave unsaid. In contrast with fantastic and speculative explanations about the Trinity, the Atonement, and Person of Christ which were polluting Christian thought, the great historic creeds were the negation of explanation, insisting only upon the great doctrines of Christianity as given us by God, without attempting to impoverish them by human interpretation. One of the best examples of this is our Apostles' Creed, not formulated in the time of the Apostles, but in the fourth century, yet expressing, we believe, the convictions of Apostolic Christianity.

CELESTIAL—I heard you confess, "Thence He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead." You mean that Christ will come again to earth?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—How? Will He be born again of a virgin?

MORTAL—No; in the clouds, with His angels.

CELESTIAL—What reason have you to think that?

MORTAL—Every reason. The repeated declarations of Jesus, the last message He gave His Church through the Angels at the Ascension that "this same Jesus will so come in like

manner as ye have seen Him go," and in addition to that the conviction of the apostles which appears on every page of their writings.

CELESTIAL—But you pointed out to me that many of the popular expectations about the first advent of Jesus, and based on the reading of the Old Testament, were not fulfilled. Perhaps those who look for the second advent of Christ will be just as mistaken as those who looked for the first.

MORTAL—That is possible and probable, and for that reason one must be very careful when one begins to talk about the time and the manner of the second advent, for no doctrine of Christianity has suffered so much at the hands of its friends as has this doctrine. But as a great prophecy of Christianity, as the legitimate and inevitable consummation of redemptive history, Christianity and the second advent stand or fall together.

CELESTIAL—How do you mean that it is the inevitable conclusion of redemption and man's history?

MORTAL—I mean just what my Bible and my common sense tell me, that God would not commence so great an undertaking as the redemption of the world and the overthrow of evil without finishing it. But we certainly do not see that completion. There are forces of good

in the world and also forces of evil. They are in constant antagonism. It is inconceivable that this should go on forever. My common sense agrees with my Bible when it tells me that there must be an end. "Then cometh the end."

CELESTIAL—But do you not believe that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation? Do you not believe—

> That right is right, since God is God,
> And right the day must win;
> To doubt would be disloyalty,
> To falter would be sin.

MORTAL—I do. And I feel, moreover, that there are many speaking on this subject to-day who, unconsciously, perhaps, are dishonoring the Gospel and the Church by belittling the one agency which Christ commanded to go forth and evangelize the world. I do not share at all in the views of those who would have us to believe that all the Church is to do is keep the faith herself, mark time, and watch the fulfilment of prophecy. I believe in a conquering Church, a Church that makes war on intemperance, upon unjust industrial and social conditions, and on war itself. If any man tells me that the times are to wax worse and worse, that to hope for the passing of war, for the reduction of vice and sin, is altogether illusory, I tell him in return, that for the Christian the chief thing is not what is

going to happen, but what he is going to do and to be. I remind him of what the Saviour said to Peter when he wanted to know what was going to happen to John, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." Any man who follows Christ will make war on evil however and wherever he finds it. But as to the ultimate victory, I think we can gather from common sense and the Scriptures what the Universal Church has always believed, that after the Gospel has been proclaimed throughout the world, unto all nations, Christ will come again to judge the earth.

CELESTIAL—Will all have been converted by that time?

MORTAL—No; it is clear that there will be wicked and impenitent when Christ comes to judge.

CELESTIAL—What else do the Scriptures teach about the return of Jesus?

MORTAL—That it will not be until one called Anti-Christ has appeared.

CELESTIAL—Who is Anti-Christ?

MORTAL—No one knows. John said there were many of them in his day. The early Christians thought the Roman Emperor; the Protestants, the papacy. But with this Man of Sin is to be a falling away, an apostasy in the Church. Students of Church History can mark many such periods.

CELESTIAL—What else?

MORTAL—The conversion of the Jews. This is based upon prophecy, especially upon the declaration of St. Paul that after the fulness of the Gentiles, that is, after all the chosen numbers of the Gentiles have been brought into the Church, the Jews will be brought in. Some Christians believe that this event will precede the second advent of Jesus; but from the earliest times there have been those who have held that Christ is to come and reign here upon earth for a thousand years, accompanied by His saints, a first resurrection of believers being effected when He comes, the Jews returning to Jerusalem, setting up their worship again, but finally being converted together with all the Gentiles. At the end of this thousand years, there will be a second resurrection and a second judgment. Then the earth will be refitted and inhabited forever. But these are details about which good men may differ. The great thing is the certainty of the second advent, the Resurrection, the Judgment and the victory of the Kingdom of God. The Universal Church has taught that the concomitants of the second advent are the Resurrection of the dead, the Judgment, and the end of the world.

CELESTIAL—Who are to be judged?

MORTAL—Men and angels.

CELESTIAL—What angels?

MORTAL—The heavenly beings who sinned and rebelled against God and have been bound in darkness, reserved in chains for the Judgment.

CELESTIAL—And what men?

MORTAL—All men. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

CELESTIAL—But where have the righteous dead been all this time? I thought you said they immediately passed into glory at death? Must they now, ages after their death, be troubled with Judgment?

MORTAL—No; the Judgment for them has no dread. They are raised up to be openly acknowledged and acquitted. They have no fear, for perfect love casteth out fear.

CELESTIAL—But the wicked—are they to be dragged out of the place of doom and judged? What is the use of sentencing them to a place with which they are already familiar?

MORTAL—I don't know. What I do know is that all the dead, good and evil, shall be raised, and all shall be judged.

CELESTIAL—That is a most solemnizing doctrine to believe. I know that you rely at the last upon your revelation as recorded in the Bible, but I would be the more ready to accept this doctrine of the Last Judgment if I could

see how it agrees with great convictions and intuitions of man.

MORTAL—I think I can show you that.

CELESTIAL—Proceed.

MORTAL—There are three great convictions in the heart of humanity; that there is a God, that man has an immortal soul, and that the soul will be judged. None of these depends upon Christianity, for they have been held by all men. The idea of a Judgment rumbles not only through the Bible, but through the literature of the race. Greece, Babylon, Rome, Egypt, all had their elaborate scenes of judgment. Outside the Bible, the most arresting description of the judgment is that given in one of the dialogues of Plato, the great thinker of Greece. The judges sit on a throne in the other world where all the roads from this world meet. The throne of judgment divides all these roads into two, one leading to the Islands of the Blessed and one leading to the dreadful House of Punishment. Thus you see that the conscience of man, ancient and modern, Hebrew and Gentile, pagan and Christian, agrees that the throne of righteous judgment will one day finally divide the stream of human history.

CELESTIAL—But do you not think that this whole idea of judgment is just a survival of man's fears and superstitions? The lower down

man is, the more elaborate his descriptions of the terrors of the Judgment. As man advances, he throws off these shackles of fear, fear about the sun, and the moon and the stars, and the incidents of a day, and so, at length, he will outgrow this bugaboo of the Judgment.

MORTAL—Man has cast off many of the chains of ignorance and superstition, but this idea of a Judgment he still keeps. It grips his mind as strongly as ever. Man outgrows a great many things, but he never outgrows the sense of right and wrong, and never is able to so arrange it that wrongdoing will make him happy. You can account for the idea of a Judgment only on the ground of the fact that man feels within him the pulsebeat of the moral law. The command "Thou shalt not" sounds forever in his ear.

CELESTIAL—I do not mean to deny that sense of right and wrong, and that pronouncement which conscience makes upon a man's deeds. But is not that all that you mean by Judgment, all that the idea demands, not a grand assize after death, but each man, here and hereafter, hearing the verdict of his conscience and reaping as he has sown? Is not life its own judge, without any need of a machinery of judgment hereafter? Is not the history of the world the judgment of the world? Is not the Judgment

going on all the time? He who does evil is judged immediately; he who does good is blessed, rewarded, immediately, and so on through all eternity. As one of your most musical of poets has said:

> I sent my soul through the invisible,
> Some letter of that after life to spell;
> And by and by my soul returned to me,
> And answered, I myself am heaven and hell.

MORTAL—I have no fault to find with what you tell me about the judgments of this world. They are indeed real, and they are indeed terrible. Hells of remorse and sorrow flame invisibly in thousands upon thousands of breasts now. But just how or why anyone could ever deduce from that an argument for denying the Last Judgment is more than I have been able to reason out. My common sense tells me that such present sufferings serve only to bring a fearful looking for of judgments to come. The more I see of present retribution, the more I apprehend that which is to come.

CELESTIAL—Then, by the Judgment, you mean more than the natural workings of conscience in time?

MORTAL—Yes, I mean the eternal reward, or punishment, decreed to the soul by Christ when all men shall stand before His throne.

CELESTIAL—But why are not the judgments

of this life enough? Is not justice vindicated by the events of time?

MORTAL—Not always. In many instances the history of the world has been the judgment of the world: As our great poet has sung:

> Time's glory is to calm contending kings,
> To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light,
> To stamp the seal of time in aged things,
> To wake the morn and sentinel the night,
> To wrong the wronger till he render right.

When this nation passed through the Gethsemane of its Civil War, all men felt there was a fitness in Abraham Lincoln's quoting the words of the Old Testament, how "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." But there is many a crooked way in life that has never been made straight. Men knew and sometimes see the judgments of God in time. But the plain fact of the matter is that those judgments have never satisfied the yearning of the soul for perfect justice. This world sees too many wicked nations override the weak, too much truth crushed to earth, too many righteous suffering and too many of the wicked living at ease and in peace, untouched by man's justice and perhaps not burned with the flames of remorse.

CELESTIAL—Then this future Judgment in

which you believe responds to a great instinct of man's heart.

MORTAL—It does. You can never persuade man that it makes no difference whether a man lives like Paul or like Nero, or that the difference between those two men is summed up at death. If that is so, then the complaint of the pessimist of Ecclesiastes is true! "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous."

CELESTIAL—But you would not wish to see Nero punished?

MORTAL—No; I desire to see no one punished. How much of that desire is based upon a consideration of myself, imagining that I am in the place of the man to be punished, it is hard to tell; probably a great part of it. But before any is punished, or is rewarded, the mind of mankind demands that all shall be judged. "Who shall put his finger on the work of justice, and say, It is there? Justice is like the Kingdom of God—it is not without us as a fact; it is within us as a great yearning."

CELESTIAL—And the Judge will be Christ?

MORTAL—Yes; as Paul told the philosophers on Mars' Hill, "He hath appointed a day in

which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." The Father has given the destinies of the men and angels into the hands of the Son. That lets us know that there will be mercy in His judgments, for the One who sits upon the throne of judgment is the same who came to show His love for man by dying for him. He is qualified to judge because He knows man and what is in him. Men make mistakes in their judgments. Human justice is often blind, not merely to bribes and human favor, but to the right and the truth. But the Judge of all the earth will do right because He is right. Christ will make no mistakes.

> Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us.
> He knows each chord, its various note,
> Each spring, its various bias.

CELESTIAL—And will all men be there?

MORTAL—Yes. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Without rank or distinction they stand before the judgment seat.

CELESTIAL—With a real body?

MORTAL—With the body of the resurrection, whatever that is: a real body, but not an earthly body, for it is raised a spiritual body. Our human imagination staggers at the thought of that vast gathering. If it were only the men of

our age; but when we think of all the myriads who stepped across the earth and passed down into the silence and darkness of the grave, the thing is too great for our minds to grasp. Yet Christ says all men and all nations shall be gathered before Him. Oh, the serried ranks of the dead crowding one upon the other to hear their sentences. All those who perished in the flood will be there; all the patriarchs and their generations—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; all the host of the Egyptians who were swallowed up in the Red Sea; all the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Carthaginians, Huns, Goths, Vandals; black, red, white, yellow; wise, foolish, rich, poor; all the dead who sleep in the dim caverns of the ocean, for the grave shall give up her dead and the sea hers.

CELESTIAL—And what is to be the principle upon which this judgment will proceed? How are men to be judged?

MORTAL—According to their works, or as Paul put it, "according to the things done in the body, whether it be good or evil."

CELESTIAL—You mean that men will be judged only for bodily sins, sins of the flesh? Is that what you mean by "done in the body?"

MORTAL—That and much besides. It means what man has done in the body, that is, in this form of existence; what he has done in time.

Malice, envy, unbelief, pride—these, for instance, are not sins of the body, but sins done in the body.

CELESTIAL—But if a man is to be judged, there must be some standard of comparison. I understand the figure of the law court that is used in the New Testament, how the "books shall be opened." But with what other book is the book of man's life on earth to be compared?

MORTAL—I think I can best answer that by saying that Christ is not only the Judge but He is the standard, or the touchstone, of character. God's standard is perfection. God's law is perfect. Christ alone has met the requirements of God's law. That is why all men are sinners, because they all fall short of the law of God.

CELESTIAL—Then, if men are acquitted in the day of Judgment, it must be on some other ground than that of meeting the requirements of God?

MORTAL—Yes; only upon the ground of the satisfaction of Christ. I explained that to you when we spoke of the Atonement. We are accepted only "in the Beloved." Let us suppose that Paul is summoned to the judgment seat. He often spoke of that great day and prayed that his friends might find mercy in that day.

CELESTIAL—Paul lived a good life, did he not? He was a good moral man?

MORTAL—Yes; he lived all his life, he tells us, so as to have a conscience void of offense towards man.

CELESTIAL—Why would that not suffice for him in the day of Judgment?

MORTAL—Because Paul, although he vindicated his reputation for moral probity, also confessed that he was the chief of sinners. If he was a sinner, no matter how many his good works, they would not save him.

CELESTIAL—What would save him?

MORTAL—His faith in Christ. It was Paul who said, "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

CELESTIAL—Then, if Paul is acquitted in the day of Judgment, it is upon precisely the same ground as that of the dying thief who lived a wicked life all his days and repented only in the article of death.

MORTAL—On the same ground, sinners saved by the grace of God.

CELESTIAL—But what will you do with a man like Samuel of whose righteous life you tell me? He was a good man, but, unlike Paul, he never heard the Gospel preached. How could he believe on the name of One whom he had never seen nor heard?

MORTAL—Samuel will be saved just as Paul,

by the infinite sacrifice of Christ. But as he was in a different position as regards that sacrifice, he will be judged accordingly.

CELESTIAL—What do you mean?

MORTAL—I mean that a man who has heard the Gospel will be judged according to his attitude, taken freely and with full responsibility, toward the Saviour.

CELESTIAL—Those who accept Him?

MORTAL—Will be saved.

CELESTIAL—And those who reject Him?

MORTAL—Will be lost.

CELESTIAL—But that is awful!

MORTAL—It is. So is life, so is human destiny. It was an awful thing for God to put His Son to death on the Cross. It is an awful thing for a sinner to reject that salvation.

CELESTIAL—But Samuel; you started to tell me about him?

MORTAL—He will be judged according to the law.

MORTAL—What law?

MORTAL—The law of Moses, the law of the Hebrews. It gave man sufficient light and instruction to make him accountable in the day of Judgment, for as many as sinned under the law shall be judged by the law.

CELESTIAL—But the law, you tell me, condemns everybody, even Samuel the most moral

man of the Old Testament times, as Paul is of the New.

MORTAL—All we are told is that it was possible for them, in some way, to exercise a faith in God that would save them. "These all died in the faith, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city."

CELESTIAL—Then there is a city, a place prepared of God, for the Old Testament saints, just as truly as there is a place prepared by Jesus for those who "believe also" in Him?

MORTAL—Yes; heaven has room for them all.

CELESTIAL—But what will you do with Socrates who never had the Hebrew law or the Christian Gospel? And that brings up the fate of the millions upon millions who have lived and died without having heard of the name of Jesus.

MORTAL—They, too, shall be judged by the law.

CELESTIAL—What law?

MORTAL—The same as the law of Moses and the law of the Gospel, the perfect law of God.

CELESTIAL—But they have heard neither the law nor the Gospel.

MORTAL—Nevertheless they have heard the law of God.

CELESTIAL—How?

MORTAL—In their own conscience. They are thus a law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the law written on their own hearts, their own conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

CELESTIAL—There is no chance, then, of the Judge being unjust, for all whom He condemns will first be condemned by their own conscience?

MORTAL—Yes, and all whom He saves will know that they have been saved, not by their works, but by the grace of Christ.

CELESTIAL—And you, with whom I have had these conversations, mortal like all your fellows, what will you do in the day of Judgment? Will you take confidence that though there has been sin, there have been good works also? Will you think of the words of counsel you have spoken, of the words of Eternal Life that you have repeated to men from the Bible, of the deeds that you may have done for the sake of Christ, of the sick beds where you have knelt by the side of the sufferer, of the open graves where you have stood in the sleet of winter and the heat of summer?

MORTAL—No; upon none of those things.

CELESTIAL—Upon what then will you rely?

MORTAL—Upon Him who loved me and gave Himself for me. This is my only plea, and this my only hope, the faith of that old hymn you heard us sing today.

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

XII

Common Sense and Future Punishments and Rewards

THE Celestial Ambassador, having returned to his own habitations, and having given the sinless immortals an account of man's belief in the Judgment, is asked by them if the decisions and sentences of the Judgment Day are final and irrevocable. He is unable to answer, and once more, and for the last time, is sent down to earth to question man concerning that belief which brings all theology to a close.

Again he hears us recite together the Apostles' Creed, and having joined me after the service, thus interrogates me:

Celestial—You finished your Creed by saying "I believe in the life everlasting."

Mortal—Yes.

Celestial—Just what does that mean?

Mortal—It means that we believe in the immortality of the soul, that it exists forever, and particularly that phrase, the "everlasting life," means the life of everlasting bliss which is bestowed upon the redeemed.

Celestial—You told me last about the Judgment, how some would be acquitted and

some acknowledged. What was the reward granted to the saved?

MORTAL—Eternal Life; Christ, our Judge, says, "The righteous shall go away into eternal life."

CELESTIAL—That means an endless existence of bliss?

MORTAL—It does.

CELESTIAL—And the wicked, the impenitent, the unbelieving, what happens to them?

MORTAL—The same Judge said, "These shall go away into eternal punishment."

CELESTIAL—Horrible doctrine! I believe that you are indeed a fallen creature, else you could never have had such a belief. Do you tell me that the whole number of the lost, having been condemned in the Judgment, are sentenced to an eternal doom, an endless punishment?

MORTAL—I do. But please bear in mind as we discuss this point, that I am not the one who passes the sentence, and that I have not created this belief out of the imaginings of my own fallen nature, for such you have truly described it to be, but find it an integral part of that religion which God has revealed for man's salvation. To my mind, both common sense and revelation confirm the fact of eternal retribution.

CELESTIAL—But Christ, that noble and gracious Person, the God-Man of whom you told

me! Surely you cannot pretend to follow Him, and yet believe in such a doctrine as future punishment?

MORTAL—That is the chief reason why I believe in it, because Christ taught it. It is He whose lips were bathed in mercy, whose every sigh was of pity and love, and who took little children up into His arms and blessed them, who is the one great Teacher on this solemn theme. It is as if He foresaw the objections which would be brought against the doctrine, and the difficulties which it would occasion, and for that reason gave it His particular sanction and reiteration. Not once or twice, but at sundry times and in divers manners, He proclaims this unspeakably solemn teaching. As one of the poets has put it,

> Christ on Himself, considerate Master, took
> The utterance of that doctrine's fearful sound.
> The Fount of Love His servants sends to tell
> Love's deeds; Himself reveals the sinners Hell.

CELESTIAL—Suppose it is revealed in the Bible, and taught by Christ; how does common sense confirm such a revelation?

MORTAL—Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

CELESTIAL—I accept that.

MORTAL—And in making provision for their salvation, God gave His Son to die for man.

CELESTIAL—That, too, I accept.

MORTAL—Then the remedy was great and awful beyond man's comprehension.

CELESTIAL—It was indeed a great salvation.

MORTAL—Then, sir, if the remedy was so awful, the disease must have been awful.

CELESTIAL—That is reasonable.

MORTAL—But if man can be saved without that remedy, or if a man can refuse to take it, can trample the blood of the Cross under foot, and still be saved, in other words, if ultimately, there is no difference between the fate of a forgiven and an unforgiven sinner, then Christianity as a plan of salvation is without meaning. Common sense tells me if Christ is a Saviour, He must save men from death, for the wages of sin is eternal death. Either He is such a Saviour, or He is not. If He is, if men are eternally saved, then men may be eternally lost. If He is not, then men need no Saviour and the problem of Christianity need no longer detain us. This is a point that is usually ignored in the discussion of this question; men avoid it because it fills the soul with awe. But since you have raised the issue, I must be perfectly frank in my statements. That is the question that men in the world are asking today, and quietly deciding in one way or the other. After all, is there anything to be saved from? Is Christianity just a

sweet appeal to practice the nobler virtues, or is it also the revelation of God's righteous indignation against the impenitent sinner and His awful judgments upon sin?

CELESTIAL—But you surely misunderstand me. I did not mean that Christ is not a Saviour, or that sin is not more than an offense of time, and demands no punishment and retribution herewith. All that I grant. I see how the law of retribution is stamped deep upon the face of human nature.

MORTAL—What do you mean then?

CELESTIAL—What I object to, is not future punishment, not future retribution, but everlasting punishment.

MORTAL—Why do you object to it?

CELESTIAL—Because it seems utterly inconsistent with your belief in a mighty and beneficent God.

MORTAL—How?

CELESTIAL—That He should create beings who should pass through the trials and dangers of this life and then condemn them to eternal punishment.

MORTAL—If the purpose of God in creating man was the happiness of the creature, there might be something in your objection. That is the false assumption that men make who wish to discard what Christianity teaches on the sub-

ject of retribution. But common sense and revelation teach us that God's purpose in creation was not the happiness of the creature.

CELESTIAL—What then was His purpose?

MORTAL—The glory of God. If the happiness of the creature was the end of creation, then the creation, not merely from the standpoint of eternity but from the standpoint of time, is a tremendous failure and indictment of the power and goodness of such a God. When we pass our final judgment upon life, we must do so in the light of the revealed truth that the Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of Judgment.

CELESTIAL—But how does such a creation with such a terrible possibility reveal the glory of God?

MORTAL—It reveals it in the fact that men do, of their own free will, and in spite of the temptations and besetments of life, its doubt and pain, choose God for their portion, and hereafter God's glory will be seen in His never-to-be-withdrawn favor to them.

CELESTIAL—Yes; I can see that. But what about those who did not choose God?

MORTAL—God's glory and holiness will be manifested in His eternal disfavor to them, what the Bible calls eternal punishment. The holiness of God is His glory, and holiness and sin are forever incompatible.

CELESTIAL—Then, your God, as one of your Scottish poets puts it:

> Sends one to heaven and ten to hell,
> All for His glory's sake?

MORTAL—No; God sends no one to hell. But His glory demands that sin be punished, and He has shown us no way how a man who refused His mercy can escape the everlasting Judgment. It is easy, sir, to scoff and mock at this doctrine. How many preachers, poets, philosophers, moral and immoral men have done it! But they bite on granite. There it stands forever imbedded in the truth of Nature and revelation.

CELESTIAL—But, surely, if not inconsistent with God's purpose in creation, the eternal punishment of the wicked is not in keeping with your idea of the justice of God?

MORTAL—How so?

CELESTIAL—For this reason: sin is a thing done in time and by a finite creature, but eternal punishment means that an infinite penalty is meted out to a finite creature for a temporal fault. What have you to say to that?

MORTAL—In the first place this: what sin is, in its extent and enormity, man cannot judge. He is born in iniquity; he breathes its atmosphere from day to day; and since he is unable

wholly to comprehend what sin is to God, neither is he qualified to say the penalty which God has decreed for the unforgiven sinner—infinite, eternal punishment—is unjust. The criminal is not the man to pass on the fairness of his sentence. There is a mystery of iniquity which is beyond man's appreciation. If sin were against man, finite penalty would suffice; but sin is against the Infinite Being God, and that makes possible the infinite penalty. But we do not need to go to the descriptions and threatenings of Judgment to stand in awe of sin. The great demonstration of what God thinks of sin is what He has done to save men from it. If sin is so terrible as to demand the tragedy of Calvary, the Son of God, wounded for my transgressions, pouring out His soul unto death, then my common sense tells me that if it took the Holy and Infinite Victim to make satisfaction for sin, to provide an escape for the sinner, unforgiven sin may well be visited with an infinite penalty. Eternal punishment is not presented to us in the Bible as a thing by itself, but as the fate of those who reject the infinite satisfaction made for it. No, sir, trouble not yourself about the justice of God. The Cross tells man how God can justify the sinner and also how He can punish the sinner.

God's justice is a bed
  Where we our anxious hearts may lay,
And, weary with ourselves, may sleep
  Our weariness away.

CELESTIAL—But God is love. You baffle me with your arguments about the purpose of God in creation and the justice of God. I can never reconcile such a doctrine with the love of God.

MORTAL—Then you must abandon the God of Christianity.

CELESTIAL—Why?

MORTAL—Because the same Christianity that tells you God is love, tells you God is a consuming fire. The same religion that gives you the sublime demonstration of the love and mercy of God, warns you of His everlasting punishments.

CELESTIAL—You mean that when the Bible defines God to be love, it is a love that must be reconciled with His wrath against sin and His punishment of the sinner?

MORTAL—Yes.

CELESTIAL—But how can it be done. I think of the lost suffering their endless torments. Surely God's love must find some way to stop this. These sins of man are done in time; if he really saw that this dreadful fate awaited him as an impenitent sinner, then he

would change his way of living and accept Christ as his Saviour.

MORTAL—Your trouble is this: you speak as if punishment were only a thing of the future, and in its last form it is. You talk as if, were it shown you that God punished no one in the future, you would have no difficulty in believing in the love of God. But let me point out the inconsistency of this. Men suffer here; men are punished now. The same reason for refusing to believe in God because of future punishment, applies to our belief in God here. If future punishment is inconsistent with the goodness of God, even more so are present sufferings; for the revelation of Christianity is that only the wicked and finally impenitent, those who have been fairly judged and heard, will be punished; but the plain fact of our present state and present life is, that not only the wicked and the guilty, but sometimes the innocent and helpless and noble and pure suffer the most in this world. But in spite of the fact that men see so much of that kind of pain and suffering in this world, they continue to believe in God. Why then should a man cease to believe in God when it is revealed to Him that the wicked shall be punished hereafter?

CELESTIAL—Yes; I see the soundness of what you say. But is there not a logic of the

heart as well as of the mind? Do you not, as you once before read me out of your poets:

> Faintly trust the larger hope?
> that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt and taints of blood;
>
> That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete.

Can you, sir, not

> trust that good shall fall
> At last, far off—at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring?

MORTAL—Yes; if God would have everyone to be saved, certainly I would. But I do not substitute my natural affections, my own solicitude for my own self, for the plain and repeated warnings of the Christian revelation. The Bible tells me that some, whoever they are, will be eternally punished.

CELESTIAL—Here is a pamphlet one of your citizens handed me, it seems to deal with this subject of future retribution. Have you seen it?

MORTAL—Yes; it is by a popular annihilationist.

CELESTIAL—What is that?

MORTAL—That is the name given to those who believe that the wicked and finally impenitent will not be eternally punished, but will be annihilated. That is one reason why books like this are so popular. Men will go from church saying the Christian teaching as to future punishment is severe, and if it is so, then there is just one thing to do, and that is to repent. But if a man tells them that the wicked will be destroyed, will cease to exist, they will not trouble much about their sins, because there is a big difference between being blotted out of existence and being eternally punished. That is true of all the popular perversions of Christianity, men like them because they take the severity out of the Gospel. Men who want to believe that the wicked are not punished, find it easy to believe what they wish. Now these annihilationists play with Greek words such as "everlasting" and "hell" and "hades" and "Gehenna," and taking some sayings of the Bible literally, such as death being the wages of sin, and that the wicked shall be destroyed, build up their theory of extinction. Against it, is the universal instinct of man. Some men might believe, let us imagine, that not all cease to exist at death, but that some continue to live; and others, the wicked, after being judged by God, shall be forever destroyed. That is contrary to human instinct and

also to a common sense interpretation of the Bible. You may play with words, but the whole tenor of the teaching of the Bible is to warn men against eternal punishment. Jesus said it would be better for some that they had never been born. A soul forever alienated from God may well be spoken of as destroyed, but it is a destruction that is far worse than and far different from annihilation, cessation of being. The sinner might well wish that in the Judgment the Judge should pronounce his sentence thus: "Memory cease to recall, conscience no longer burn, soul cease to exist!" But instead of that, Jesus says, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

CELESTIAL—But cannot that "everlasting" just mean "everlasting" in intensity; a complete and intense punishment of the wicked that annihilates them?

MORTAL—No; that is a popular idea, but absurd. Only the wish could have been father to such an interpretation. Our English Bible speaks of eternal life and everlasting punishment, but the Greek word is the same in both cases; either translate it in both cases eternal, or in both cases, everlasting. Whatever is meant by the Judge as to duration of time in one sentence is meant by Him in the other. If the life of the forgiven and acquitted is everlast-

ing, then the doom of the wicked is everlasting. If the doom of the wicked is not everlasting, then you cannot claim that the bliss of the righteous is everlasting.

CELESTIAL—What church is this?

MORTAL—One of our so-called Liberal Churches.

CELESTIAL—What do they believe?

MORTAL—There is their creed printed on the board in front of the church. Would you like me to read it?

CELESTIAL—Yes.

MORTAL—Very well.

We believe in—

> The universal fatherhood of God.
>
> The spiritual authority and leadership of His Son, Jesus Christ.
>
> The sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit.
>
> The trustworthiness of the Bible as containing a revelation from God.
>
> The certainty of a just retribution for sin.
>
> The forgiveness of sin when the sinner repents of it, either here or hereafter.
>
> The resurrection of all men from the dead.
>
> The final harmony of all souls with God.

CELESTIAL—How does that appeal to you?

MORTAL—Splendid, except in three articles, where it either fails to come up to, or goes beyond, the teaching of the Bible.

CELESTIAL—What are those three?

MORTAL—The article about the spiritual authority and leadership of Jesus Christ.

CELESTIAL—But does not the Bible teach that?

MORTAL—Yes; but far more than that.

CELESTIAL—What?

MORTAL—That men may believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The reason why this creed falls below the Bible in this article about Jesus Christ will become apparent when I speak of the other two that go beyond the Bible, for when men put things in the Bible that are not there, it carries with it the necessity of taking out something that is there. The creed of the modern Liberal shows that; he puts in his creed an article to the effect that all souls will be restored to God, whether or not he takes advantage of what God has done for him in Christ, and then they must make the death of Christ mean something else than the only means of reconciling a sinner to God, and so they speak of Him as a leader and as having spiritual authority, and you imagine they had never heard the great New Testament words, "Mediator," "Saviour," "Redeemer." Anyone who leaves those words out of his confession of faith, advertently or inadvertently, is simply ignoring the one great thing in Christianity.

CELESTIAL—These Liberals, you tell me, say that they believe in the forgiveness of sin when the sinners repents of it, either here or hereafter. What exception do you take to that?

MORTAL—I find no fault with the here, but with the hereafter. The doctrine that men are to have a chance to repent rests largely upon the wish of the impenitent heart, and after that, upon bringing that wish to the interpretation of a few scattered passages in the Bible. If the soul has a chance to repent and reform after death, then nearly all the parables of Jesus have lost their meaning. With the utmost solemnity, He warns men to pass through life temporal so as not to lose life eternal. If the impenitent have a second chance to believe, so have the righteous and believing a second chance to be lost.

CELESTIAL—But in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, was not Dives made better for his punishment? Did he not think of others, of his evil brethren?

MORTAL—Yes; but the gulf between him and the beggar was not bridged. It is contrary to the great direction of the teachings of the Bible, and contrary to the instincts of our common nature, that men who do not repent in this world will do so in another, or if they did so, would be saved. "As the tree falleth, so it must

lie." "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is righteous, let him be righteous still."

CELESTIAL—But their last article about the final harmony of all souls with God, I like that.

MORTAL—You may like it, but that does not make it the teaching of Christianity. It is not a question of what you like or don't like; it is a question of what God has revealed unto us.

CELESTIAL—But that seems a poor climax to the history of Redemption—one place, heaven, where Christ reigns with the believers, and another world, hell, where the lost sinners are punished. I thought I heard you say that every knee shall bow, that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

MORTAL—You did. But when I said that, I did not mean that every soul shall be brought into harmony with God, for the Bible tells us that there are some souls which shall be in everlasting enmity with God. But even those souls shall bow the knee. God ruleth over all, and the world of the lost, wherever and whatever it is, will be under His dominion. Wherever in the Bible you come upon a passage like that of Ephesians where Paul says it is the will of God to reconcile all things to Himself, you must read it in the light of the whole background of the Gospel, that men are lost and fallen creatures,

that God has appointed a means of reconciliation through Jesus Christ, and a day when we may repent and believe, and that that day comes once and forever to an end. Only those will be reconciled to God who choose to be reconciled.

CELESTIAL—Are there many then that be saved?

MORTAL—His disciples once asked Jesus the same question. I will give you His answer, the plea, the warning, the entreaty, that lies back of all preaching and teaching.

CELESTIAL—What was it?

MORTAL—Strive to enter in at the straight gate!

CELESTIAL—But you have told me nothing about those who enter into eternal life.

MORTAL—No; for no one objects to their bliss. Here and there we have a few intimations of what their life will be. These fragments are like the pieces of a mosaic; we put them together and we have a beautiful picture of the state of those who have entered into everlasting life. I might give *you* the intimations of the hopes of mankind; I might tell you what prophet or Psalmist, or Jesus Himself said. But I close where the Bible closes, I bring our discussion to a conclusion by listening to that burst of heavenly music, heard once on Patmos by that disciple whom Jesus loved.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him;

And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.

CELESTIAL—That is a noble music. I fain would hear it myself. To know the joy and feel the power of that heavenly life, I could almost wish that I myself had been a mortal, for to enter into the joy of that life as one redeemed by your great Saviour, would, I am thinking, be worth all the sorrows and trials, even the sins, through which you mortals pass in this earthly life. May you be of the number of the redeemed! I shall never forget what you have told me. Perhaps this Saviour will come one day to our world, and show His love and grace and power as He has revealed them unto you. Mortal, farewell!

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